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THE PUBLIC LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

VIII.

The Training of the Apostles

(PART IV.)

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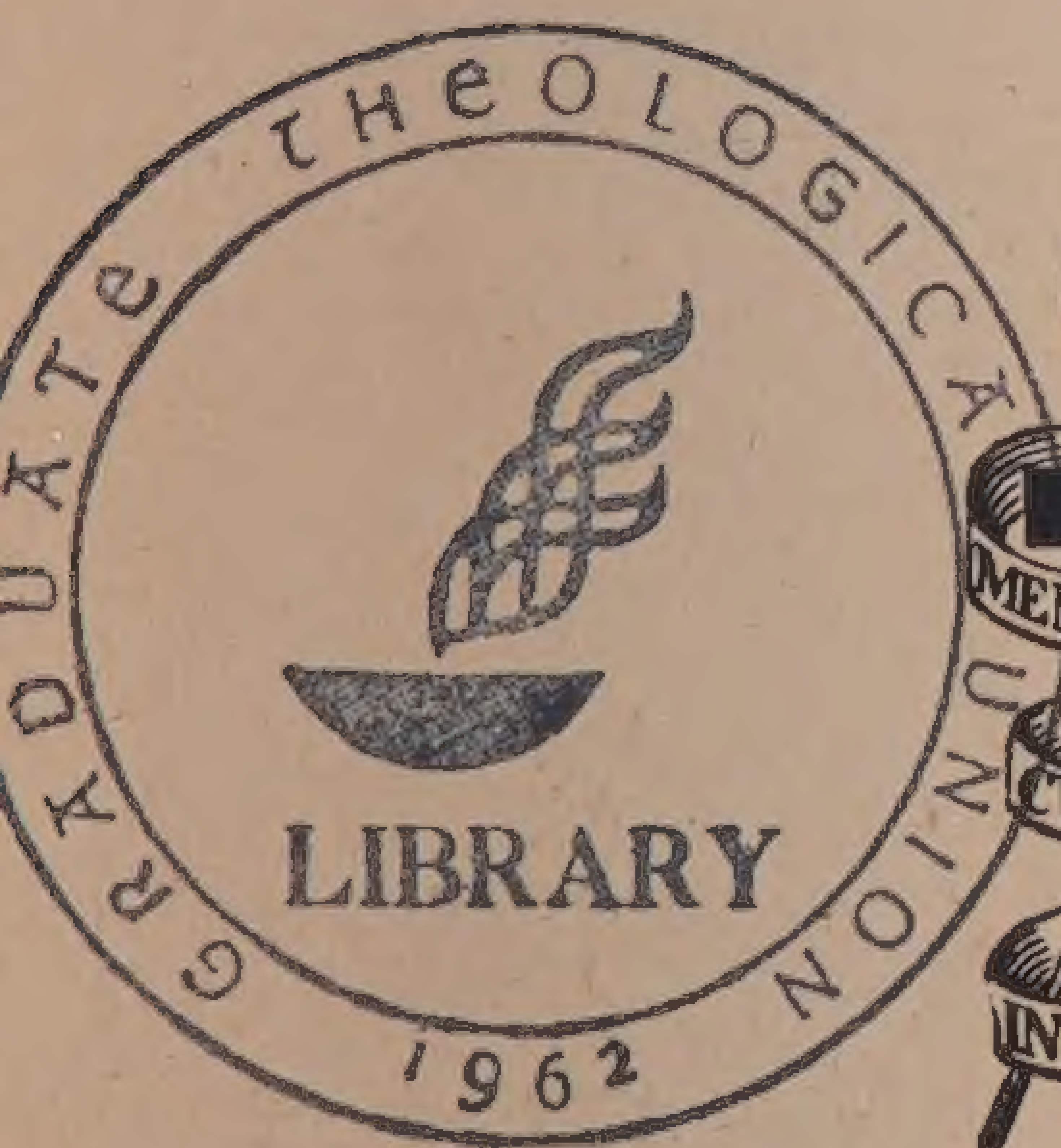
THE TRAINING OF THE APOSTLES

(PART IV.)

BY

HENRY JAMES COLERIDGE

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(Psalm cxlvii.)

PREFACE.

THE present volume concludes the first half of the Public Life of our Lord, if such a division can be made, not according to the space of time occupied by its parts, but according to the line of conduct chosen by our Lord in His public action. The space of time occupied by this volume and those which have preceded it is considerably more than half of the whole of the Public Life, for it embraces two years out of the three during which His Ministry was carried on. Indeed, the last incident comprised in this volume, is much less than a year before the Passion itself. The division which is here followed is the most natural that can be made, if we consider the great change as to His method of procedure adopted by our Lord at this point of the history, a change noted by the Evangelists themselves, a change which makes the account of the few months which intervene between this time and that of the Passion very different in character from that of the preceding years. If it were not for the great additions made to the history by the two last Evangelists, we should already be close upon the Passion itself in our narrative of the Life of our Lord.

The title of the *Training of the Apostles* which has been given to the four volumes of which the present is the last, will not be understood as implying that our Lord did not begin to train His Apostles before this period, or that He did not continue their training after it. But this space of time was in a peculiar manner devoted by Him to their training, and it was during this time that that teaching of their souls by the Providential action of the Eternal Father, of which we hear so much in the Gospels, was at work in raising their minds to the recognition of the great truth of His Divinity. It is the Confession of that Divinity by St. Peter which closes this period, by the great promise made to him by our Lord, in return for the profession of his faith, a promise in which we have for the first time a mention from our Lord's lips of the Church which He came from Heaven to found. It is this, the selection of St. Peter as the rock on which the Church is to be built, which makes the point at which this volume closes the very centre and pivot of the Gospel history.

In a work like the present, which must be written and published by instalments, it is of use to divide the whole into separate portions, more or less large, and the names chosen for such portions need not be pressed too exclusively or hardly. The last chapter of the present volume contains as much of a review of the whole of the period now before us as is necessary, and this review need not be repeated here. The portion of time covered by the present volume itself

is considerable, and it embraces many very momentous incidents and steps on the part of our Lord. Such is the charge delivered to the Apostles before they were sent out to preach away from their Master, such the mission itself, such the murder of St. John Baptist, such, again, the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, a miracle twice repeated, and, on the first occasion, followed by the long discourse in the synagogue of Capharnaum in which the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist is so plainly insisted on. This discourse, and the Charge given to the Twelve, already mentioned, form the principal dogmatic and practical instructions with which we have had to deal in these pages. The narrative closes naturally with the few miracles which intervene between the discourse just now mentioned, and the close of the period with the great Confession of St. Peter. It is a great privilege to be allowed to labour in any way for the elucidation of these Divine teachings of our Lord, and no one who is acquainted with the nature of the task will be tempted to think that he has been successful in explaining them completely. He must be content with not having spared his labour, and with the hope that he may have contributed in some small degree to make the doctrines and practices of the Church more intelligible to her children.

I have been too often disappointed in attempts to accelerate the completion of the whole work of which these volumes form a part, to be sanguine as to the future. I have learnt not to be prodigal of promises and

forecasts with respect to that completion. I am in hopes that before the present year closes, I may be able to see it at least complete as far as it goes, by the publication of the volumes which precede, in the order of history, the Public Life itself. The first of these volumes, which are to embrace the whole of the Infancy and Hidden Life of our Lord, has just been published under the title of the *Preparation of the Incarnation*. The remainder is in the press, and will appear before Christmas. When this part of the work is thus accomplished, there will be no gap left at the beginning, even though I should never be allowed to pursue it to the end. Meanwhile I may once more express my thankfulness for the kind sympathy with which these volumes have been received, and for what I value very highly indeed, the assurances which have reached me of the helpful prayers of those who have been interested in their subject, and, on that account, in their author.

H. J. C.

31, Farm Street, Berkeley Square.

Feast of St. Mark Evangelist, 1885.

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CHAPTER I.

Our Lord at Nazareth.

St. Matt. xiii. 54—58; St. Mark vi. 1—6; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 68.

THE two earliest Evangelists tell us that, immediately after the last miracle of which we have spoken, that on the dumb possessed man at Capharnaum, our Lord left that city and began another of His apostolic circuits throughout the country. His steps were first, as it seems, directed to His own home at Nazareth, a place which, as far as we know, He had not seen since the very beginning of His preaching, which, indeed, He had opened by that celebrated scene in the synagogue of Nazareth, of which we have the account given us by St. Luke.¹ On that occasion our Lord had seemed to provoke the harsh treatment which was dealt out to Him, by refusing to work any of His miracles there, as if He had meant to rebuke that assumption of a kind of superiority on the part of His fellow-citizens, which implied that they had a right to everything great and conspicuous that He could do. He told them of the many lepers in Israel who had been left unhealed when Naaman the Syrian was healed by the Prophet Eliseus, and of the many widows to whom Elias might have been sent, instead of the widow of Sarepta. The result had been, as we know, that they were so enraged with Him as even to attempt to take away His life. Long before such an idea entered the minds of the Chief Priests at

¹ St. Luke iv. 16, seq.

Jerusalem, His fellow-citizens of this little Galilean town, which had been for so many years His home, had, in a transport of jealous fury, taken in hand His actual murder, and they had only been defeated in their attempt by an exercise of His miraculous power. He had left them, and He had not returned. Since that time His name had been heard of all over the country, and He was usually spoken of as the Prophet of Nazareth. But now a turn had taken place in the tide of His popularity. The calumnious charges against Him were rife on every side, and He had to pass from place to place, having, as He had lately said, nowhere to lay His head in peace. Nazareth was too much out of the way, and too insignificant a town in itself, for His bitter enemies from Jerusalem to follow Him thither, and it might be that He might now find a more friendly reception among those who had known Him as a child and a youth, and be able to impart to them some benefit for their souls' welfare, for which they had not been fit at that earlier point of time.

‘And going out from thence, He went into His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath was come, He began to teach in the synagogue, and He taught them in their synagogues. And many hearing Him were in admiration at His doctrine, so that they wondered and said, How came this man by all these things, by all this wisdom, and miracles? What wisdom is this that is given to Him, and such miracles are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the Son of the carpenter, the Son of Mary? Is not His Mother called Mary, and His brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude? And His sisters, are they not all with us? And they were scandalized with regard to Him.’ Nothing can prove more completely the utter hiddenness of our Lord during all the

years which passed before His beginning to preach, than this great difficulty on the part of His townsfolk in believing anything great concerning Him. And on the other hand, nothing could more completely justify the line which He had taken on the former occasion, than the behaviour of these people of Nazareth now. Then He had done no miracles to satisfy their curiosity, and now that He came back to them with the fame of so many stupendous miracles ringing through the whole land, they still could not believe that He was anything better than one of themselves.

It does not appear that our Lord worked before them any of those great miracles of which mention is made in their remarks. It must therefore be understood that they speak of the miracles of which the reports were carried abroad all over the land. The teaching in the synagogues they could listen to, but their language seems to imply that when they heard Him they were struck with astonishment indeed, but not converted or affected with any salutary impression. How could the Son of the carpenter, the carpenter Himself, teach in this way? It may be easier to understand these words if we remember that the characteristic of our Lord's manner was its authority. This is mentioned more than once, by all the three historical Evangelists. It was not so much the actual teaching or substance of the teaching, as the authority with which He spoke, which made so great an impression and caused so much astonishment. The words are repeated by St. Luke in his account of the first preaching of our Lord in the synagogues of Galilee, where he adds that His speech was with power or authority. They are repeated by St. Matthew after the relation of the Sermon on the Mount. They are implied in this place by St. Mark.² It is, therefore,

² St. Luke iv. 32 ; St. Matt. vii. 29 ; St. Mark vi. 2.

natural to suppose that what struck these people of Nazareth, in one whom they had known as their fellow-townsmen, was this—the authority which every word implied, the absence of appeal to the accustomed oracles of the time, Rabbi this or Rabbi that, the declaration of the meaning of the Law of God or of the duties of men, without direct argumentative proof of what He laid down as true. This would have been something new to them, even in a stranger, but when it came to them in the person of the humble artisan, the Son of Mary and, as they supposed, of Joseph, it was more than they could bear. It does not appear that He added the performance of miracles on this occasion as the evidence of His authority, but they had heard of these, though they could not understand them. The authority which He implicitly claimed was evident, and the performance of His miracles they had heard of. On the other hand, they saw nothing in Him different from what they had known of Him in old times. He was the same humble and gentle Jesus, without any appearance of dignity or greatness, as far as they could see, and now He had with Him a band of disciples, which showed that to some persons at least in the country He had approved Himself for what He was reputed to be, a Prophet and a Teacher of the Law of God. They could not understand how these things had come about. ‘How came this Man by all these things? and what is this wisdom that is given to Him, and such miracles as are wrought by His hands?’

And then, as a crown to this unwillingness to accept any one who spoke in a manner so unlike the teachers to whom they were accustomed, there came the terrible impediment to faith, which was based on their knowledge of His family and antecedents. Just as Nathanael had been unready to believe that anything good could

come out of Nazareth, so now the Nazarenes themselves could not believe that anything good could be found in one of their own townsfolk. 'Is not this the carpenter, is not this the carpenter's Son? Is not His Mother called Mary, and His brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Jude? and His sisters, are not they all with us?' It is a sad truth of human nature, that we can never willingly believe great things of those who are near to us and well known to us. In the first place, we are jealous of those whom we know and with whom we are familiar, we do not like to see them preferred and honoured, as if that were, in a certain way, a slur on ourselves. If we are to give honour and to acknowledge ourselves so far inferior, let it be to those who come from a distance and have something foreign to recommend them. That does not place us in so great a position of inferiority as the other. It was precisely because Cana, the town from which Nathanael came, was so near to Nazareth, that he was not ready to believe in the Prophet of Nazareth.

Then, again, there is truth in the old adage that familiarity breeds contempt. Certainly there could be nothing in the character or demeanour of our Lord to give occasion for contempt, except that He made no pretensions to any authority or dignity at ordinary times. But at all events, He hid His Divine wisdom and power most marvellously, and besides this, these Nazarenes judged not only from what they knew of Him, but from their acquaintance with the others whom they named. They had seen the humble artisan, St. Joseph, they knew the extreme humility and great meekness of our Blessed Lady herself, and those of whom they knew the most, because they had seen most of them, were the brethren of our Lord and His sisters, that is, His cousins and kinsfolk. Some of these did not as yet believe in

His Divine Mission, while the sisters, as was likely, were settled in the town, married to some of their neighbours, and in no respect, as far as we know, distinguished from others, except perhaps by their simplicity and humility. To recognize the Divine authority of the new Teacher, of Whom they had heard so much, would be at once to acknowledge a kind of pre-eminence and dignity in all those who belonged to Him, and the Nazarenes, as has been said, judged of the whole family together. And among so many as those who are here mentioned, it is quite possible that there were some who had not won very greatly the respect or veneration of their townsfolk. They may have had some enemies, some rivals, some familiars who did not feel inclined to bend the knee before them. For it is very difficult for the whole of a large family to be of equal virtue, and to behave with equal prudence and circumspection, and yet human nature exacts very high respectability and purity of demeanour in those who in any way belong to the Church, even by connection of blood with her ministers. This seems to be the account to be given of the feelings prevalent among the Nazarenes, in regard to the family of our Lord. They knew, they thought, too much about Him, or at least about His, to receive Him at once as a Prophet.

Our Lord may have had many reasons for going to His own city at this time. In the first place He had been, as it were, driven out of Capharnaum by the malice of His enemies, and it might seem natural for Him to make a new trial of the people of Nazareth, among whom He had not been for so many months. At the time of which we are speaking, moreover, it was well for Him not to be much in the public gaze, and a retirement to Nazareth may have been in some way politic, as turning away the attention of His enemies.

It could not be but that He would love very much the place in which He had lived so long. He had all the natural affections in their perfection, and without any defect or alloy of what is low or base or selfish, and every nook of the town and neighbourhood must have been known to Him and full of the holiest and the sweetest memories. When we revisit a place in which we have lived for many years, we are full of natural tenderness, though perhaps there is hardly a spot in such places as to which an awakened conscience might not have some sharp rebuke to administer to us. But, in proportion as our recollections are happy, because they are virtuous and holy, in that proportion also must it be a joy to us to revisit those places, and a consolation to live over the past with the thoughts suggested thereby.

Our Lord was fond of external nature, as we see from His parables, and those images which He uses so familiarly were not taken by Him simply because they were of use to Him as illustrations of His doctrine. His mind naturally dwelt on them, and a great part of His vocabulary, so to speak, was taken from the objects of nature. It is natural to think that the rocks and fields and valleys and hills, the flowers and fruits of His native city, should have been used by Him, time after time, to raise His thoughts to Divine things in the Kingdom of His Father. Not that He needed them to raise His thoughts in the manner in which we need them, but that He delighted to use these natural objects in this way, and so consecrate them for the use of His children after Him. He made the whole of the home and neighbourhood in which His youth was spent into a great temple of His Father, and, as we love the churches and shrines which we have frequented in our youth, so He would love Nazareth and its neighbourhood. There was the tomb of St. Joseph, there the workshop in which so

many happy hours had been spent, there was the little house, half house and half cave, in which so many years of His intimate converse with His blessed parents had been passed. How could the Sacred Heart not love all this? He came back to breathe His native air, to move about again where He had been for so long, to refresh Himself with the old places and the familiar haunts of His childhood, before He had gone forth to battle with the malice and ingratitude of men. Nazareth was a place of retirement, of obscurity, of secret intercourse with His Father, and it was full of the precious memories of the thirty years of the Hidden Life. He had hardly ever before been there without His Mother, and not for long without St. Joseph, and every turn and corner of Nazareth would recall them to Him. Humble as it was, hard as were its inhabitants on Him, it was His home. If He owed anything to any place in the world, it was to this. If He was bound to take care of those who belonged to Him most closely, they were here to be found.

Moreover, it appears that our Lord was now intending to make a fresh start in the career of Apostolical preaching which had occupied Him so long. It is very likely indeed that He knew at this time of the murder of St. John Baptist, which took place about this point of the history, if not even before. Although the immediate effect of that murder would certainly be to make His own preaching more liable to interruption and persecution, for tyrants such as Herod never go back in their course of violence and cruelty, still it was to our Lord a fresh call to great exertions on an even more extended plan of operations in the work of His sacred Ministry. We shall find how He engaged on this fresh course of activity in the next chapter. But it was like our Lord to make this preliminary visit to His own city of

Nazareth, if only to begin it, as He had begun His first great outburst of Apostolic preaching, in the synagogue of Nazareth. It is remarkable that He began that first course of preaching immediately on the reception of the news of the imprisonment of St. John. He seems to begin again now, on the eve or immediately after the death of the Baptist. And in each case He puts Himself before the citizens of this little town, as if to receive from them the humiliation which was so fitting a preparation for His Ministry. It has passed into a custom with great Catholic preachers to do some act of humiliation, before they begin any great work for God, and this visit of our Lord to Nazareth is one of the acts of His Public Life on which this custom is founded.

There is a great difference, and indeed, a contrast, between that earlier incident of His Public Life to which reference has been made, and this, which is mentioned in its proper place by St. Matthew and St. Mark. St. Luke makes no mention of the incident before us, because he has, according to his custom, inserted the former and similar incident, which had been omitted by the earlier Evangelists. The one thing which occurs both on that earlier occasion and on this, is the answer which He made, that a prophet is not in honour in his own country, or not without honour, except in his own country. All the other circumstances of the two incidents are different. On the first occasion there is no mention of the relatives of our Lord, His Mother, or His brethren, or of the fact that He was the carpenter, or the Son of the carpenter. All these details belong to the present scene, and not to the former. It seems therefore a fair inference to draw, on this occasion, that our Lord welcomed the rebuff as a kind of penance, which He desired to receive before setting out on His new expedition, and before sending

forth His disciples also. This is the simple answer which He makes on this occasion. But Jesus said to them, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in His own country, and in his own house, and among his own kinsfolk.' He made no complaint, but He warned them that the honour which they would not do to Him would be done by others. The natural reasons for this truth have been already explained. But there may have been many Divine reasons, both for the truth itself and for the action of our Lord in drawing attention to the truth, on this particular occasion.

Many great ends in the Kingdom of God might be defeated or hindered if the facts had been otherwise, if it had been in His Providence that His conspicuous saints and servants should be known as such and honoured by their own people, and in their own homes. Such a state of things would be dangerous in many ways. It would hinder in those saints themselves that full and rapid growth in sanctity, which requires the keen air of solitude and the absence of worldly and family cares. It would inevitably expose them to considerable temptations, it would tie them down by local and domestic associations and influences, it would tend to narrow their hearts, and make them less perfectly detached instruments in the hands of God for the great works which He entrusts to them. It would cramp their Apostolic liberty, and detract seriously from their influence outside their own circle as well as in it. It would surround them with a band of self-interested followers and hangers-on. It might even in the long run tend to foster the detestable spirit of nationalism, the pest and plague of the modern Church. For there are no ties so powerful and so seemingly innocent and natural as those of kindred and local neighbourhood, and yet they are most contrary of all

in their influence to the true Apostolical spirit, and indeed to the spirit of Catholicity, which requires a recognition of the truth that the servants of God are of no country, or rather of all countries, and that we have but one Home and one Mother, the Holy Catholic Church.

If we ask ourselves why our Lord took this particular step at the time when it was taken, it does not seem very difficult to find an answer. He was now engaged very mainly, as has been said, in the training of the Apostles, and it was now time for their first public mission to preach independently of Him, that is, without His close companionship and daily direction. We have considered, in the last volume, how much of His conduct at this time, as it is recorded for us by the Evangelists, seems to have been directed to this great object. From the moment of their solemn call to be with Him day after day, down to this time, there are but few things in the history which do not seem to have a most direct reference to this part of the work of our Lord. Even the parables, as we have considered them, seem to have this special character of instructions, in the first instance, to them. Such is also the character of many of the incidents lately related, as the stilling of the storm and the like. He had just before this, as it seems, made those remarkable answers to the Scribe, and the other disciple, about the hardness of the lot of those who would share His work and the danger of going among kinsfolk and acquaintance even for the most holy of purposes. It would seem that, in this visit also to Nazareth, our Lord may have had the instruction of the Apostles, and through them, of all Apostolic men, in view. He might wish to show them how unfruitful, in the ordinance of God, would be the labours of those who went among their own kindred

in the hope of evangelizing them. From no one could the lesson come with so much force as from Himself. If the Nazarenes would not listen to Him because, as they would have said, they knew too much about Him, surely there could be no hope of success for other labourers in the vineyard who had not the perfect virtue and conspicuous sanctity of our Lord. Who could hope to be more happy than our Lord in such an enterprise?

Moreover, the words which are here recorded as spoken by Him have a significance of their own. They are a promise as well as an explanation. On that former occasion He had said, no prophet is accepted in his own country. That was a negative statement, but now He makes a positive statement. 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred.' The words imply that the honour which is denied at home will not be wanting elsewhere. Nazareth and Jerusalem might scorn Him, but the world would listen to Him. So it was to be afterwards with St. Paul, as our Lord told him, that the Jews would not receive his witness to his Master, but the Gentiles would.³ The very fact that a man who comes with the message of the Gospel to his own home is well known there, and so despised, is balanced by the other fact that the man who comes from a distance has a prestige about him, even in the simply worldly order, which makes him acceptable. Thus it is found with missionaries to the heathen, that they are venerated in the first instance because they have come so far and have no ties or interests of their own to look to. Thus the door is opened to them, and they have the opportunity of showing what they are and what they have to say, without prejudice. The Apostles were to find this,

³ Acts xxii. 18—20.

perhaps, in their own preaching within a few days of this very visit to Nazareth.

‘And He could not do any miracles there,’ or ‘many miracles there, only that He cured a few that were sick, laying His hands upon them, and He wondered because of their unbelief.’ St. Matthew says simply that He wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief. It was not that His Divine power, or the power inherent in His Sacred Humanity, was fettered or taken away by their unbelief, but that it was the rule of His Mission to require some kind of faith ordinarily in those for whom He worked miracles. His compassion could not refuse to heal these few sick, and these perhaps were more ready with the necessary faith than the others, but as a general effect, He did nothing or very little. It is not to be doubted that there were there many who would have otherwise have been most fit objects for His mercy, but it was as it were, frozen up by the miserable want of faith. Instead of that glowing atmosphere of confidence and hope which usually surrounded Him, He found at Nazareth a kind of Arctic climate, in which even those whose hearts, if they had been in the midst of the crowds who ordinarily followed Him, would have been warm enough, were smitten with the deadly chill which reacted, so to say, on the tenderness of His own merciful Heart, in preventing Him from shedding forth on them the overflowing bountifulness of Its compassion. It is characteristic of our Lord, that He did not let these few poor sick persons suffer from the unbelief of the rest. He found them out, it is not said how, or they found Him out. Their own sufferings had prepared their hearts for the grace which He designed for them. They were ready to believe, because they had greater need than others, and thus their sickness turned, as is so often the case, to their

great spiritual benefit, which brought with it also the temporal blessing of the healing of their bodily miseries. As our Lord had said, to the disciples of the Baptist, 'Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me,' so these poor sufferers had the blessing of their own faith and then the blessing of their miraculous cures. For it would not have been in accordance with the usual Providence of His Father, to allow our Lord to be simply rejected and to go away, without leaving behind Him some testimony of His Divine Mission, as the reward of the faith of those few who were raised up, as it were, by God, to bear their witness to Him, while others took offence.

When it is said that our Lord could not do many miracles there at Nazareth because of the unbelief of the inhabitants, we must of course understand the words in harmony with the whole of the Catholic doctrine concerning His Divine Person. That is, He was never fettered by anything, as to the exercise of His omnipotence, or of the unlimited powers which belonged to His Sacred Humanity. But He was limited by the rules under which His Ministry was conducted, for the benefit of mankind, and thus, in an ordinary way, He did not work miracles, except when there was faith in the recipients, or in those who asked His mercy for them. The limit to His powers came, not from Him, but from those among whom He did not find faith, and it was a limit only in the sense in which we have now spoken. Again it is said that our Lord marvelled on account of their unbelief. That is, He showed surprise, as at other times He showed indignation, or anger, or trouble of heart, as at the grave of Lazarus. Nothing was unknown or hidden from Him, but when things happened which naturally might excite the feelings of surprise or consternation, of sorrow or fear, and the

like, it was for Him either to manifest the existence of these feelings in Himself or not to manifest them, and when He chose so to do, for purposes of His Divine prudence or wisdom, this is specially recorded for us by the Evangelists. For He would not have manifested such feelings but for some good purpose. In this case the unbelief was most unreasonable, and showed a hardness of heart, the result of pride, making them look down on our Lord because they knew all about His family, which was in itself astonishing and extraordinary. Thus our Lord noted the character of this infatuation and wished it to be left on record that He marvelled at it, for the use of the faithful in all ages of the Church.

It is at this point, then, in the Life of our Lord, that we finally part, as it were, from Nazareth and its inhabitants. In many respects that spot had long been the most blessed upon earth. It seems to have been the home of the parents of our Blessed Lady, her birth-place, the home of her first infancy. It was the place, out of the whole world, to which the Angel Gabriel was sent to announce to her that she was to be the Mother of God. Here the Incarnation took place, here our Lord spent His Infancy, Youth, and early Manhood. Here St. Joseph lived and died, here the blessed home-life of the Holy Family was led for so many years. Even to this day, there is said to be a charm and a beauty and a heavenly fragrance about the place, giving to it and its inhabitants a character of their own. And yet, if we ask what is its pre-eminence in the history of our Lord's Ministry, we have to find our answer in those two scenes of which the Evangelists speak. These are all that tell us how Nazareth treated our Lord. The unbelief of His fellow-citizens filled Him with astonishment, like the belief of the Gentile centurion at Capharnaum. The words of the Evangelist show us that He

had reason to expect in them a far readier faith, and that he had not found it.

It is not easy to penetrate the secret springs of this unbelief of the Nazarenes. Their case is not precisely that of the people of Capharnaum, or of Galilee in general, as far as they were affected by the dulness of heart of which our Lord complained. Still less is their case that of the proud, corrupt, ambitious priests at Jerusalem. In these last we see the workings of personal impurity in ministers of the altar, as well as of covetousness, of ecclesiastical ambition, and of worldly policy. Capharnaum was the most externally worldly of these three towns. It was a mart of commerce, a place of active business, of the coming and going of many for purposes of traffic. Its inhabitants, or rather those of them who did not believe, had their minds full of temporal interests and pursuits. Theirs was not the hypocrisy, the external devotion masking the depraved heart given up to passion, which was to be found in the so-called Holy City. The people of Nazareth, a population, perhaps, of a few hundreds, had neither the detestable vices of the religious capital, nor the engrossing worldly occupations of the emporium of trade. Narrowness of mind, petty personal likes and dislikes of families and classes, the stunting and dwarfing prejudices of a small community, in which the proprietor looked down on the artisan and the artisan despised the labourer,—these and other similar influences are all that we can see to account for the unfitness of the Nazarenes to meet the trial by which they were to be tested by Providence. They had had among them, in the virtues and perfections of our Lord, His Mother, and St. Joseph, a far more splendid manifestation of the presence of God among them than any that could have been furnished by a series of the most stupendous miracles. But the holiness

of the lives of the Son of God, His Mother and her Spouse, had produced no more conviction in them than in the rocks and trees around them. The Samaritans with whom our Lord once spent two days,⁴ believed in Him 'because of His own word,' and the Nazarenes had had Him among them for nearly thirty years. And then, when the fame of all His miracles came to them, month after month, from the very beginning of His preaching, that again had no more effect upon them than on the trees and the rocks. It was the will of God that they should receive this witness from the mouths of others, and at this they took offence. When they took our Lord to the Mountain of Precipitation to cast Him down, it must have been that His refusal to work miracles for them made them conclude that He was an impostor, and that it was their business to punish Him. And now, a year and a half later, there is no attempt at violence, but He is met by a calm contemptuous perversity, which all His sweetness and affability could not avail to break down.

⁴ St. John iv. 40.

CHAPTER II.

The Mission of the Apostles.

St. Matt. ix. 36—38, x. 1—15; St. Mark vi. 7—11; St. Luke ix. 1—5;
Vita Vitæ Nostræ, § 69.

It appears, that immediately after the visit to Nazareth, of which we have last spoken, our Lord started on a fresh Evangelical circuit of the towns and villages of Galilee. This was the part of His work at once the most laborious and the most consoling. It was the part of His Life which has remained after Him, in the Church of all ages, in the work of the missionary saints, especially so called, those namely whose labours have been spent in evangelizing the country parts of Christian lands, in which the people, although already prepared for the Word of God, by the existence among them of the regular organization of the Church, by the reception of the sacraments, and of the Christian doctrine, are still frequently found to be ignorant, uncared for, with many prevalent vices and evil customs among them, and yet with the solid foundation of the faith to make them ready recipients of the Divine Word. As He had begun His Apostolical career in the synagogue of Nazareth several months before, and had gone forth from that home of His childhood to spread the news of the Kingdom of Heaven over the whole of the province of Galilee, so now for the second time He made His departure from Nazareth, after receiving there the rebuff and the humiliation lately mentioned, and began once more, with His indefatigable compassion, to endeavour to re-

claim the masses of the population from the ignorance of God in which they were practically living.

It seems also certain that at this time our Lord was aware of the cruel and wanton murder of His Precursor, St. John Baptist, by the licentious King Herod. If this was the case, then there is that other resemblance between the action of our Lord at this point of the history, and the conduct which He had pursued at that first outburst of His Apostolic zeal. We have seen from the accounts of the Evangelists at the former time, that the tidings of the imprisonment of St. John had been the signal for the beginning of the public Ministry of our Lord. Now the death of the Baptist was the signal for this second and fresh beginning on our Lord's part. The persecution was to be met by Him in His own way, that of great boldness and even venturesomeness, as it might seem, in the display of His powers and in the following out of the work which was placed in His hands by His Divine Father. For the cruelty of the world is never to make the ministers of Divine Truth shrink from their high commission, and on the other hand, the blood of the martyrs once shed brings down on the labours of their brethren whom they leave behind them, a special blessing from Heaven. Whenever the Church has had to suffer in any special way, she imitates her Divine Master in meeting the suffering by fresh and more extended exertions and greater enterprises, and her losses in one part of the world are made up to her, in the good Providence of God, by new conquests in other parts. She is never to go back, never to grow weary, never to be discouraged. There will always be fresh fields for her work as yet untrodden, always populations ready to be brought in, in the place of those from whom her labourers are for the time shut out.

There is, however, a contrast to be observed between

these two periods of the Public Life. It cannot be forgotten that our Lord had already gone more than once over almost the whole country of Galilee. It was to be one of the laws of missionary labour in the Church, that the scenes of such labours should be revisited, over and over again, by Apostolic preachers. But the lapse of time had produced some change in the dispositions of the populations themselves. At first the people had everywhere welcomed Him, except indeed the proud and jealous inhabitants of the town in which He had been brought up. Elsewhere the people had at once been at His feet, and there had been no voice raised in opposition to His teaching. Now things were much altered in this respect. He had become the object of jealousy on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities, and they had determined to take His Life. And then they had added to their opposition and to their plots against Him, the detestable calumnies of which so much was said in the last volume of this work. The effect on our Lord had been that He had felt obliged to retire from the public gaze, and to keep aloof, in a special way, from the city which He had made His own after leaving Nazareth, and where His Blessed Mother still resided. But it is very probable that the calumnies of which we speak had influenced the people to a great extent against Him, and that wherever He now went, He was more or less exposed to a renewal of the charge of a league with Satan, and to a reaction on the part of the people who were no longer free from suspicion against Him.

The people were in fact in a state of great perplexity, not by their own fault, but by the fault of their ordinary and recognized teachers, who were now opposed to the claims of our Lord. They may be compared to an originally Catholic population, among whom the ordinary

clergy have become infected with heresy or with a schismatical spirit. Our Lord was exposed, in some measure, to the prejudice which prevented the people from welcoming Him in that undoubting and simple manner in which He had at first been welcomed. He was like some well-known missionary, whose character had been slandered behind his back, and who finds, in consequence, that he is not listened to with confidence. He had not, indeed, to deal with an amount of inveterate and traditional prejudice like that of the inhabitants of a Protestant country when they are addressed by a Catholic missionary. For the calumnies of the Pharisees had not taken root so deeply. And besides, there was about our Lord an ineffable charm and power which drew all hearts to Him, and which made it more difficult to shut the ears of the people against Him than can be the case with others. Still, the people were not unaffected by these calumnies, nor were they simple slanders, as they might have been if they had proceeded from persons without authority and position. Those who spread them were the emissaries of the Chief Priests in Jerusalem, men of high reputation, sent down from the central seat of authority by the appointed pastors of the flock. And it seems that at the time of which we are now speaking, they had been adopted more or less by what we should call the local clergy, the Scribes and Pharisees on the spot. Influences such as these, brought against any teacher in the Name of God, are most difficult to deal with, because they seem to put the authority of God Himself against His own messenger. The poor peasants had been brought up to reverence their Priests and Scribes, as speaking in the Name of God, and now they found them teaching them, practically, not to listen to the Prophet who worked miracles so marvellous also in the Name of God.

Our Lord met this new state of things by a fresh measure of His infinite charity and wisdom. He did not leave off preaching and working miracles, but He added to His own preaching that of His Apostles, whom He now at length sent out to preach in His Name. The condition of the people, at this conjuncture, is described in most touching terms by the first Evangelist. 'And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity. And seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd.' The word which is here rendered 'distressed,' means properly torn by a scourge, flayed, and thus it comes to mean figuratively worried, tormented, afflicted, harrassed, troubled. Thus it represents very well the state of these poor people at this conjuncture, when they could not even listen to the teaching of our Lord without perplexity, and when the authority which was given them for their guidance seemed to be divided against itself. The other word which is here translated 'lying' signifies the scattered, wandering, helpless condition of a flock of sheep whose shepherd has neglected and abandoned them. Thus we have two distinct features in the condition of the population of which the Evangelist speaks—the positive trouble and worry which resulted from the uncertain teaching of their Scribes, and on the other hand the neglect and abandonment of the flock on the part of its appointed guardians. They needed guidance and care, and they got neither, and, what was more, the appointed guardians used their power and authority only to perplex and harrass the flock. They were in fact wolves themselves, feeding themselves at the expense of the flock and caring nothing about them, except that

the presence of our Lord and His teaching forced them to that poor amount of activity which was positively mischievous, by setting the people against Him.

Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest.' It is obvious that this new step of our Lord's in multiplying Himself, so to say, by the mission of the Apostles, two and two, into the towns and villages of Galilee, must have been one over which His Sacred Heart would have rejoiced, on account of the great glory which would immediately result to the Name of His Father. To Himself also it was a step which must have given Him intense pleasure, for it was the accomplishment, in a certain sense, of the design which He had long formed, of committing the preaching of the Word of God to others besides Himself. The whole delight He was hereafter to take in the work of the Christian ministry in all ages, was contained and anticipated in this rejoicing over the first occasion in which that ministry was entrusted to men like ourselves. He had now provided for the most urgent and fundamental need of the faithful populations in all time, for the first thing that must be done is the instruction and conversion of the people, who are afterwards to be fed, not only on the Word of God, but on the life-giving sacraments which were to be the fruit of the Passion. At least the flock of God would not be without its appointed teachers and pastors, and He must have seen in the Twelve, as He addressed them on this occasion, sufficient qualifications for the discharge of the glorious duties which were to be imposed upon them.

It is true, the sacraments were not to be yet, for the redemption of the world had not yet been accomplished on the Cross, the Church was not as yet born from the

side which was to be pierced by the lance of the soldier on Calvary, and the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because, as St. John says, our Lord was not yet glorified. But, before all these great results could be obtained, the sacred ministry of the Word of God might be committed to the Apostles. Alas, there was even now a traitor among them, but this did not hinder our Lord from this necessary measure of providing at once for the larger instruction of the people, who were as sheep without shepherds. The mission of the Apostles during the lifetime of our Lord enabled Him to watch over their work, and to complete their formation with His own hand, and perhaps also it may have had a calming effect on the many adversaries whose tongues were so recklessly unchained against Him, while, on the other hand, the multiplication of the preachers spread the Word of God far and wide in a shorter time. The Apostles themselves were probably greatly encouraged by this confidence in them on our Lord's part, and when they went forth again to preach in His Name after the Ascension, it was not on any new work that they were to be engaged, nor were they without experience of the manifold assistances and marvellous aids which God would always vouchsafe to them in the cause of His Son. And the wants of the famished populations were thus more quickly supplied, and they were accustomed to hear the Word of the new Kingdom, not only from our Lord's own lips, which were soon to be sealed in death and by His Ascension into Heaven, but from the mouths of men like themselves, men who had begun as ignorant fishermen, but who had been able to speak the Word with authority, and to call, in proof of their Divine mission, the miraculous powers with which they were now armed by our Lord.

Every such enterprise as this must be begun by prayer,

The Mission of the Apostles. 25

and our Lord now enjoined on the Apostles the special prayers before the sending forth any of them on this new ministry, which have been caught up by the Church and perpetuated in her special prayers and mortifications for the seasons which precede the solemn ordinations of her ministers. This was to be the law of the new Kingdom, that every great act of the Church was to be preceded by public prayers and mortifications, as the legitimate and appointed means of drawing down on those who were to be consecrated to the service of God a special gift of Divine grace, proportioned to the work and position to which they were to be called. It was our Lord's own habit, as has been seen more than once in the course of this history, and He now enjoins it on the Apostles in words which constitute a law of the Church of all time. He does not add the precept of fasting, for the reason, perhaps, already given, in what has been said in His answers to the questions put to Him on the subject of such regulations for the new society which He was founding, for which the proper time had not yet come.

It seems to have been some little time after this injunction of special prayers for the sending forth of the labourers into the harvest, that our Lord carried out the intention which He had then signified. We are told that He 'called together' His twelve disciples, and this seems to mean that He addressed the charge which follows in this part of the Gospel of St. Matthew to them alone. It had, as it appears, a double purpose, like so many of the instructions and exhortations of our Lord. For He could not but see in the Twelve before Him, not only the chosen band of companions whom He had selected for that immediate purpose of the Apostolate in His own company, and while He was yet on earth, but in them He would also see their successors in the

sacred ministry to the end of time. It may indeed be considered as one of the motives which induced our Lord, at this particular time, to send out His Apostles on their first missionary expedition, which was not to last long, that there might be this instance of such an expedition in His own lifetime, in order that He might have the opportunity of leaving behind Him the very particular instruction on the manner and spirit of all such works, which were to be continued in His Kingdom in all ages and in all lands. On this great occasion our Lord would naturally address Himself, in the first place, to that which was immediate and urgent, that is, the promulgation of a series of rules for the use of the Apostles in the work which was now and at that moment to be undertaken. At the same time He would also take care so to mould and frame His instruction as to make it also a perfect system of rules for the Apostolic ministry in general, as it was to be carried out by these same Apostles, after the Day of Pentecost, all over the world, and by their successors, as has been said, in all times of the Church. It required the wonderful and Divine wisdom and prudence of our Lord to arrange His precepts with a view to this twofold object, and we shall see that in one particular, at least, He afterwards carefully let them see that what He had said now was not to be considered as binding for all time and under every kind of circumstance. The great discourse now before us is naturally divided into two parts, which correspond more or less accurately to the twofold range of the instruction itself. We shall speak in this chapter of the first part of this charge, and deal with the second by itself.

The first thing that we are told by St. Matthew concerning this mission of the Apostles, is that our Lord now conferred upon them miraculous powers for the

authentication of their mission. It has been already mentioned that they received such powers on their selection for the Apostolate, which took place immediately before the Sermon on the Plain. It seems, therefore, that on the occasion of their first mission these powers were renewed and confirmed, and perhaps amplified, for we find our Lord presently telling them, among other things, to raise the dead, a power which had not been conferred before. It is clear, indeed, that the powers thus conferred, whether on this occasion or before, were not so absolutely at the command of the Apostles as to enable them to do exactly what they liked at every moment, just as we find that the saints who have been most largely gifted in this way in the history of the Church have not been, so to say, masters of their powers to use them just at discretion. In the same way we find that a saint like St. Francis Xavier had not on all occasions and permanently the gift of tongues. Such is the law of the distribution of such powers to the saints. They do not become ordinary, in the sense in which we can ordinarily make use of our natural faculties, so that it becomes a marvel if on any occasion we are not able to use them. It is natural to think that when the Apostles were to be sent out in this new manner, our Lord would increase and enlarge their powers, in this respect of the miracles by which they were to prove their mission to be from God, especially as He desired that on such occasions, after His own example, there should be on their part the freest and largest use of these powers for the benefit of the sick and afflicted in every way. For the preaching of the Word of God in any extraordinary manner is an occasion on which the exercise of charity should be most especially practised, and on the largest scale, in order to bring down blessings from God on the work, and also in order

to promote fervour, gratitude, union of hearts, joy, tenderness, and sympathy. For the Word of God, addressed to large bodies of men, has this special power of rousing fervour and enthusiasm, and thus it makes the conversion or the advance in grace of each one more easy, by the happy contagion which passed from one soul to another, and which makes comparatively easy the sacrifices and humiliations which may be required for the end which God has in view in the souls to whom the preacher addresses himself. For this reason it may be that this injunction is repeated here, as if our Lord attached a very great importance to the charity which was to be exercised, first, on the bodies of men in order to gain their souls, and heal them in a far nobler and more perfect manner.

‘These twelve Jesus sent, commanding them, saying, Go ye not into the way of the Gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ This is the first precept given to the Apostles on this occasion, and it is evidently one which was limited to that occasion. Before our Lord went up into Heaven, and when He gave His final and general commission to the Apostles, He told them to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and to go and make disciples of all nations. But this present mission was a particular and a definite mission, and as such it was necessary that it should have a particular and definite object. The Church has the general mission to all the world, but, nevertheless, her ministers are not to preach unless they be sent, and they are always sent by her authorities to some definite field of labour, beyond which they are not to go, and beyond which if they do go, they may be invading the jurisdiction and the mission of others. So in this, the first instance of a

particular mission, our Lord carefully specifies the persons and populations to which He sends them. Their mission was a part and an extension of His own, and we know that He did not preach except to the chosen people. We find the same kind of limitation even in the Acts of the Apostles, in which St. Paul is forbidden by the Holy Ghost from preaching in the provinces of Asia and Bithynia, in which, as we learn from the exordium of St. Peter's First Epistle, the Prince of the Apostles had already laid the foundations of the Churches. Thus we have, in this special commission of our Lord on the present occasion, an anticipation of the rules of the preaching of the Gospel in all ages. It is plain, moreover, that this present mission was only for a short period of time, and that, if our Lord had sent the Apostles to the Gentiles, or to the Samaritans, it would have created a fresh difficulty for Him with the authorities at Jerusalem, who would not have scrupled to accuse Him of attacking the privileges of the chosen people, as they accuse Him of speaking without respect of the Temple of God.

The lost sheep of the house of Israel were quite enough for their labours at present, and the very words of our Lord show the tenderness of His Sacred Heart for the people whom He so dearly loved, and the manner in which He regarded them, as being deprived, not through their own fault, of that guidance to Him which God intended them to find in the ministers of the Synagogue. The Law, as St. Paul is fond of telling us, was meant to lead the people to our Lord, to prepare them for Him and to enable them to know Him when He came. If this was true of the Law, it may be applied to the whole system of the Jewish religion, as it was actually in work in the days of our Lord. This shows us that the Scribes and Priests, and the whole

Hierarchy, was intended by God for a purpose exactly the reverse of that which was the fruit of their influence, in the case of the reception or rejection of our Lord by the people. They were intended to help men to Him; to bring them to His feet, to embrace His faith themselves, and to lead others to do the same. This was exactly the contrary of that which they did. The sheep, therefore, were most truly lost, for they got no help from their appointed guides to the truth, and they were strongly influenced by them to reject the truth when proposed to them. The time was fast approaching when our Lord's words to the Pharisees at Jerusalem would be applicable to the great mass of these appointed shepherds, that they 'shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men, for you yourselves do not enter in, and those that are going in, you suffer not to enter.'¹ Terrible words indeed, and applicable in the present day to hundreds of so-called Christian ministers, who prevent those under their influence from entering the true fold, instead of setting them an example by entering in themselves.

Our Lord, in the next place, gives the Apostles instruction as to the subject-matter of their preaching. 'And going preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.' This was the staple of the preaching of our Lord Himself, and also of that of His Precursor, St. John Baptist. It is expressed in almost the same words by the Evangelist, in the places in which he describes the beginning of these two courses of preaching. In the one place it is only varied by the words, 'Do penance,' for the approach of the Kingdom is given as the reason for the exhortation to do penance. It is practically the same subject-matter that we find set forth by St. Paul in his discourse at Athens to the philo-

¹ St. Matt. xxiii. 13.

sophers. For the matter of that discourse comes to this, that God has made the world, and is now about to judge it by the Man Whom He hath chosen, of which He has given a proof by raising Him from the dead. 'God indeed having winked at the times of this ignorance, now declareth unto all men, that all should everywhere do penance, because He hath appointed a day wherein He will judge the world in equity, by the Man Whom He hath appointed, giving faith,' that is, evidence, 'to all, by raising Him from the dead.'² This enables us to understand what it was that formed the main subject of the preaching of the Apostles, as of our Lord Himself. It cannot be doubted that the Apostles, when they had to preach to the Jews, insisted strongly, in the first place, on the acceptance of the true faith about our Lord. That was necessary to give them access, so to say, to the hearts of their hearers. But the belief in our Lord, even if they had recognized in Him the Incarnate Son of God, would have been sterile and fruitless, unless it led them to receive the message which He came to deliver. The great end which He and the Apostles after Him proposed to their hearers was salvation, and for salvation repentance would be necessary, and the consideration of all in their past lives which might be a hindrance to salvation. Thus it seems certain that the chief subject-matter of this preaching was the same as that which, to the present day, forms the subject-matter of the ordinary preaching of the Catholic missionary, the great eternal truths, the foulness and mischief of sin, the rights of God, the future Judgment, the methods of preparing for it, and for reconciling ourselves to God after we have offended Him, the great issues of life or death, Heaven or Hell, which await every child of Adam after the close of his term of probation. If this were so,

² Acts xvii. 30, 31.

we need not be surprised at the silence of the Gospels as to this point, for the approach of the Kingdom of Heaven, the nearness of the time when the great account has to be given in by each several soul, would be the very topic on which the daily preaching of the followers of the Apostles, in the times in which the Gospels were written, was mainly founded. These things were too familiar to the faithful to require any authoritative statement concerning them in the narratives of the Life of our Lord.

Next to the subject-matter of the preaching which our Lord enjoined on the Apostles, comes the evidence which they were to use for the purpose of proving their Divine mission. This was the more necessary, on account of the utter want on the part of these new missionaries of any title to the office of teacher, as it was commonly understood by those to whom they were sent to preach. They were neither Priests of the Jewish Law, nor Scribes, nor Pharisees, nor had they any official character whatsoever, by which their words might be enforced. But our Lord had already armed them with powers, by means of which they could readily gain the ear of the simple and faithful people. He had conferred on them the power of working miracles, even of the highest class, and this was to be with them, as with Himself, the all-sufficient and Divine voucher for the truth of their teaching and the authority of their commission. For these miracles were, as St. Matthew says, when speaking of St. John Baptist's envoys to our Lord, the 'works of the Christ,' the predicted signs of Him Whom God from the first had promised to send. Moreover, the exercise of these works of Divine mercy was a characteristic of the Gospel Kingdom, and the marvellous spiritual benefits which it was to confer were to be symbolized and represented by the cures of diseases and

other similar blessings conferred on the bodies of men. 'Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, raise the dead. Freely have you received, freely give.'

This injunction may show us that the working of miracles had a twofold office in this Apostolical expedition—it was to be the evidence of its truth and the representation of its character. It was to prepare men to receive it as from God, and it was to show them what God was about to do for their souls, by what His ministers had power to do for their bodies. It is important to notice this, because it shows us that the practice of every kind of work of charity and mercy must always be a part of the work of a missionary who preaches in the name of God, even when it is not in the Providence of God that he should have these miraculous powers by which the mission of the Apostles was authenticated. Indeed, it might be said with truth, that this ordinary kind of evidence of a Divine mission becomes far more necessary when it has to stand alone, and without the aid of the exercise of miraculous powers. The mission of the modern preacher, at least among Christians and Catholics, does not require the preternatural authentication of miracles. For such a missionary is sent by the authority of the Church, and those to whom he addresses himself are the children of the Church. But he will always be in need of the authentication which is derived from a well known character of mercifulness, charity, beneficence, zeal, disinterestedness, and this can be shown in no better way, ordinarily, than by works of corporal mercy, as far as they are within his reach and as far as he has opportunity for them.

The last words of our Lord, 'Freely you have received, freely give,' are capable of a twofold meaning. They may refer to the absolute gratuitousness of the gifts which they were to exercise in favour of the faithful

among whom they were sent to preach, and they may also refer to the boundless largeness and liberality with which these gifts were communicated to them and to be exercised by them. In the first sense, they are a most severe prohibition of anything that approaches most distantly to the very shadow of self-seeking in the administration of the gifts of God. In the second sense, they are an exhortation to the greatest possible profuseness in their distribution. In the first sense they forbid the sin which is known by the name of Simon Magus, because he was the first, though unfortunately not the last, to attempt to bring about the imparting of spiritual powers or blessings for the sake of gain to those who administered them. In the second sense they rebuke the sloth or indolence which keeps some who have great gifts committed to them by God from using them, they forbid anything like parsimony in the service of the faithful people, for instance, anything like the doctrine which makes the sacraments so precious as to be inaccessible to those for whom our Lord intended them.

It may seem most congenial to the whole tone of this context of our Lord's discourse, that the words of which we are speaking should be understood in the latter of these two senses, in the first instance. For the whole passage reads more like an exhortation to the utmost possible activity and liberality in dealing with the gifts of God. But it is always most useful in the Church to insist on the other signification also, because the danger has always been great, especially since the time when the world became Christian, and the Church began to acquire wealth by the endowments of the princes and people, of the admixture of human motives of gain or advancement among the servants of the altar and the ministers of the Divine Word. There are many things in the work of the ministry for which it is quite allowable to act on the

principle laid down by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians, that those who serve the altar should live by the altar. This principle is sanctioned by the usage of the Church in all ages. But it only goes so far as to be a practical enforcement of the words of our Lord, which almost immediately follow on these of which we are speaking, that the labourer is worthy of his food or his hire. That is, that the temporal support of the ministers of the Gospel should be furnished to them, by those for whose benefit they devote themselves to their holy vocation. This is not selling spiritual things for temporal, but simply providing temporally for men who would otherwise not have the leisure to labour in the spiritual harvest. Anything beyond what is necessary is not sanctioned by this principle.

One great reason for providing for the clergy in Christian times and countries by way of endowment, was probably that they might thus be independent of their flocks, and so able to resist the occasional temptation which presses so hardly on some clerics in times of popular commotion—the temptation of following instead of guiding their people, and even of failing to denounce what is clearly against the law of God, when the voice of the people is strong in demanding or in sanctioning it. Again, there will always be certain services to be rendered by the ministers of religion for which the faithful will wish or be willing to make remuneration, which may come under the head of legitimate sustentation. Thus it is allowed to priests to accept ‘honoraria’ for Masses or for sermons and other labours of the same kind, which involve fatigue, exertion, and some times expense, and these things are not forbidden by any law of the Church. But the fullest carrying out of the principle which is here laid down by our Lord would be that absolute independence of all such sources of revenue or support of which

we see the example, in the rules of some religious orders, the members of which are forbidden to accept even these remunerations. The ideal at which such orders aim is the giving entirely for nothing what has been received for nothing, such as education, or instruction, or the services of the altar, or the confessional, or the pulpit, and any other priestly function whatsoever. And the good effect of this system, when it can be carried out in perfection, is visible, in the greater independence and influence of the men who will have nothing to do with any earthly reward whatsoever, who ask and take nothing at all from the faithful, and in consequence are able to speak to them, even in times of political excitement, with the perfect freedom of the angels themselves. It may not always be possible to act in this manner, on account of the circumstances of modern society, especially in countries which are not entirely Catholic. But the principle may be asserted with great profit, even when it cannot be fully acted up to and carried out universally. Thus our Lord enjoined on St. Teresa to found her first convent entirely without support except from alms, and yet He allowed her later on, in the course of her foundations, to accept endowments, on account of the necessities of the circumstances under which so many of the convents were founded.

‘And He commanded them that they should take nothing for the journey but a staff only, no scrip, no bread, nor money in their purse, but to be shod with sandals, and that they should not put on two coats.’ This is the account of St. Mark. St. Matthew puts the injunction directly in the words of our Lord: ‘Do not possess gold or silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his meat.’ St. Luke’s account is much the same only shorter. The word which

is here translated 'possess' implies, not simply possession, but acquisition and provision, and seems to refer directly to the practice of those who furnish themselves against all possible needs when they start on a journey, as if it was certain that they will find no supplies where they are going. The final clause as given by St. Matthew seems to express the motive of these particular injunctions. It seems to signify that the motive was not so much the practice of poverty, although that of itself was most valuable, as the practice of dependence on the Providence of God, Whose workmen they were in a special sense, and Who was bound to provide for them. Thus the two classes of travellers who make no provision at all for their journeys are the very poor, who have no provision to make, and the very rich, who reckon on finding everything they want wherever they go. They have no need of purses, or provisions, or baggage, for they have homes well stored wherever they go, they pass from one of these to another, and their servants pay for whatever they may want on the way. A similar kind of independent reliance, not on their own resources, but on those of Divine Providence, is here inculcated on the Apostles. Our Lord seems to say to them, you need not make any provision for your journey in these necessary matters, for you are working for One Who will take care that you want for nothing, even for a change of raiment, or an occasional need which may require money, all will be provided for you on the spot and at the time, and so you need not make provision. In this sense the injunction may be compared to that which follows soon after, of not premeditating what they are to say when brought before the tribunals.

There is certainly a great amount of tenderness and thoughtfulness in the words if they are thus understood,

a sort of parental forethought for all their needs, the supply of which is promised by our Lord, Who enumerates every item, as if to show that He had considered everything that might perchance be needed by them. In this way we may explain the apparent difference between St. Mark and the other Evangelists as to the staff, which the former says they are to take, and the others say they are not to take. Our Lord seems to mean that they were to be content with a single staff, although it was easily possible for them to lose or break the staves which they used for their journey, for that this need also like the rest would be provided for when it occurred. They were not to take with them a supply of even the most necessary things, because they were worthy of the meat and of all things which they might require. At the same time this injunction, as has been said, may be understood as securing them in the practice of actual poverty, both for its benefits to themselves, and for the sake of the good example which it would give to those among whom they were to be sent to preach.

‘And into whatsoever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. Wheresoever you shall enter into a house, there abide till you depart from that place.’ These two precepts regulate the conduct of the Apostles as to the persons with whom they take up their lodging. It is clear that they were meant to stay some short time in each city or town. For the teaching which they had to impart concerning the Kingdom of God was such as would require some days to deliver in each place, especially if the people could not be collected together except on the Sabbath days. It was therefore necessary that they should lodge with, or be the guests of, some one in the place. The language of our Lord is that of One Who supposes that there will be no lack of persons eager

or willing to become the hosts of the preachers of the kingdom, of One Who considers that they will have to choose, rather than to beg for hospitality, and confer an honour rather than receive a favour. He wishes them to lodge with the best, or one of the best of the inhabitants in each place, and to ascertain by inquiry on entering it where they had better apply for hospitality. The inquiry would reveal to them the circumstance as well as the character of those to whom they were to offer themselves as guests. When they had once made their choice, they were to decline other invitations, so as not to pass about from one house to another, which might create jealousy or rivalry, involve a considerable waste of time, and other inconveniences.

‘And when you come into the house, salute it, saying, Peace be to this house. And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it, but if it be not worthy your peace shall return to you.’ The words which our Lord bids the Apostles to use were the common form of salutation among the Jews of the time. He bade them be the first, as it seems, in the salutation, not waiting for the owner of the house to salute them. And it appears that this was a mark of humility, as it is said, of our Blessed Lady that she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted his wife St. Elisabeth. The presence in any house of those who had the special mission to preach the Gospel could not but bring a blessing, and the precept of our Lord enjoins that this blessing should be solemnly invoked on the entrance of the Apostles, thus to give a religious and sacred character to the whole of their sojourn, showing that they were not ordinary guests, but guests received for the sake of God, and specially deputed by Him. The words which follow seem to meet a possible objection, as if it could not be known whether the dispositions of the host and his

family were such as to deserve the spiritual goods of so many kinds signified by the salutation of peace, for those words certainly conveyed the idea of very high privileges, of peace with God, peace with their own consciences, and peace with all around them, and it might well happen that there might be in the family some disorder or sin which might turn away the blessing which the words of the Apostles were to convey in a kind of half sacramental manner. Our Lord therefore tells them that, if the house be worthy of the blessing, it shall certainly come on the family for the sake of the hospitality which it shows to the messengers of God, and in consequence of the prayer implied in the formal blessing. If, on the other hand, the family be not worthy, the peace of the Apostles shall return to themselves, that is, they at least shall be in peace and receive a blessing, for as sojourners in the house they will need all the more if there are some unholy elements under the same roof. Thus the Psalmist speaks of his prayer turning in to his own bosom.³ The sense here seems to be that there will be a blessing on the invocation of peace in any case, and that it will at all events dwell upon the Apostles where they are, and thus there will be no need for them to depart from the house in which they have been received.

‘And whosoever shall not receive you nor hear your words, going forth out of that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet, for a testimony against them. Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgment, than for that city.’ The words of our Lord seem to apply to two different cases which were possible in the mission of the Apostles. The first of these would be if those to whom they proposed themselves as guests

³ Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13.

would not receive them, and the second would be if the city to which they went to preach did not hear their words. In both cases the dust of the feet is to be shaken off as a testimony that the messengers or the message of God have not been received. The action implies a kind of excommunication, a solemn separating of themselves from all relations with the persons or places which have treated the Messengers of the Gospel badly, as if they would not take away with them so much as the dust which might have cleaved to their feet. This command we find to have been literally fulfilled by St. Paul and St. Barnabas in the case of Antioch in Pisidia, where they were persecuted by the Jews and driven out of the city,⁴ and there are several examples in the lives of the saints, as in that of St. Francis Xavier, who cast off the dust of his feet when he quitted Malacca for the last time.

The final words of this passage, in which our Lord speaks of the terrible punishment which shall come in the Day of Judgment on those who reject the Apostles, seem to refer rather to the second case already mentioned, that of those who reject the preaching of the Gospel, than to the first, those who will not receive the Apostles to hospitality. It seems a fearful thing to say that the punishment in that case will be more severe than that of the land of Sodom and Gomorrha. But yet the sentence is very intelligible. For the crime of Sodom and Gomorrha, though extremely heinous, was yet a sin against the natural law, or, if it be considered that our Lord's words refer to the reception of the Angels by the men of Sodom, it was in addition a crime or an attempted crime against the laws of hospitality. But the fault of those who reject the Gospel preaching belongs altogether to another order of sin, and one

⁴ Acts xiii. 51.

which especially touches God Himself, as is the case with the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost of which our Lord spoke so severely. For it is God Who sends the Apostolic missionary, and to refuse to listen to Him is to refuse the proffered mercy of God, fraught with a thousand gracious gifts and provisions for salvation and amendment of life. It is this same principle which makes the sins of heresy, schism, infidelity, blasphemy in general, sacrilege, the hatred of God, and the like, so extremely grievous. For such sins belong to the order of sins specially against the mercy and Providence of God. It is not wonderful, therefore, that the punishment which is reserved for such sins should be a hundred times as terrible as that which will be inflicted for breaches of the moral law, even when they are in themselves very heinous of their kind. The virtue of religion gives a special character of holiness to all the acts that belong to it, and so the sin of irreligion, or of opposition to religion, gives to all its acts a character of sacrilege. It is this principle which is so entirely forgotten by those who seem to think that offences against morality are the only grievous sins that men can commit, and that to teach a false doctrine, to deny the Catholic truth on a single article of the Creed, such as that of the Unity of the Church, or to remain outside that Unity, are either no offences at all, or at the worst, venial. They are sins more heinous in themselves than the sin of Sodom.

CHAPTER III.

Our Lord's Charge to His Apostles.

St. Matt. x. 16—42 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 70.

THE injunctions of which we have been speaking in the last chapter, are recorded more or less fully by the other two historical Evangelists, as well as by St. Matthew. These injunctions are in themselves evidently temporary, and intended by our Lord to apply especially to that particular mission of the Apostles which was the occasion of their delivery. Indeed, at a later time, He recalled one at least of the special precepts here contained,¹ and it is evident that others were also virtually revoked, when He gave the Apostles their great commission to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. But our Lord appears to have done more at this time than simply give them instructions which were to serve them during the few weeks of this their first essay in the labours of the Apostolate. St. Matthew subjoins to these instructions a long discourse of our Lord which is not found in the accounts of the other Evangelists. Some portions of this charge are repeated at the time when, as St. Luke informs us, our Lord sent out the seventy-two disciples on a mission similar to that on which the twelve Apostles were now sent. The report in the third Gospel does not contain all that our Lord said at this time, according to St. Matthew, although there is considerable resemblance between the two discourses. The discourse of which we

¹ St. Luke xxii. 35, 36.

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are to speak in the present chapter may be considered as one of those general instructions which our Lord gave from time to time, taking His occasion, from something that He was doing which was but temporary, to lay down principles and maxims and rules which were to be of universal and perpetual application. Thus when He had before Him the Twelve, about to start on their first mission, His Sacred Heart saw in them the whole mighty army of the Apostolical preachers in the Church throughout all the Christian ages, and the words which He proceeded to utter were evidently meant to have their fulfilment rather in the great and abiding work of those preachers in the world at large, than in the limited mission on which those to whom He spoke were now sent forth. We have therefore here a document of the highest value and importance for the Church in all ages and all places. It is the instruction which all such workmen must keep in mind at all times, and the prophecies and promises which it contains, as well as the rules which it enacts, are among the choicest treasures of the Catholic Church. Many of these prophecies could hardly have been fulfilled in the course of the short preaching of the Twelve in Galilee, but they have had their fulfilment ever since, and the time will never come when they will not be in process of fulfilment.

In this great discourse, as is evident even on the most cursory perusal, there is a great mixture of exhortation and precept. Our Lord seems as much bent on encouraging the Apostles as on giving them rules for their conduct. In this respect this second part of the charge differs from the former part of which we have already spoken. The general tenour of the discourse is to excite their courage, and inspire them with fearlessness in the face of the very great dangers to which they

are to be exposed. It seems as if our Lord intended to encourage them by the very thought of the severity of their trials and the multiplicity of their dangers. The main motive of their courage is that they are to be like Himself, and, besides this, they are strengthened by many most gracious and tender promises of assistance and support as well as of future reward. The discourse naturally divides itself into certain great portions, each of which it will be well for us to consider by itself.

The first portion is that which warns them against men. 'Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and simple as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.' Here, then, we have, first, the mission of the Apostles by our Lord Himself. Then comes the instruction contained in the images of the sheep among the wolves, and of the serpents and doves. Then follows the injunction to beware of men, and the prophecy of their being delivered up, scourged, taken before governors and kings. Then comes the injunction that they are not to take thought what they shall say, founded on the gracious promise that it shall be given them in that hour what they shall say.

'Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves.' These words at once express the special character of the mission of the Apostles and of Apostolic men in all times, as well as the authority of the sender of them, and the power which will consequently be always at

hand to support and protect, and even to avenge them. The sender is our Lord, as He expressed it at another time, 'As My Father hath sent Me so do I send you.' He is the Lord of the harvest, Who was to be entreated that He would send forth labourers into His harvest, and now the time has come, the prayer has been heard, and the labourers are sent. But no circumstances under which, in the ordinary course of life, labourers are sent into the harvest by any earthly householder or lord, can be sufficient to furnish an image of the conditions under which the Apostles and those who follow them are sent. The work of the harvester is the joy and benefit of the whole community, he goes forth with the friendly sympathy, and, if necessary, with the assistance of the whole population, for the work which he is to perform is a work which sheds blessings all around. The blessings, indeed, which follow from the accomplishment of the material harvest are very slight and transient, if they are compared to the blessings which follow on the work of the Apostolic harvester. But the hearts and minds of the populations are not of necessity with him, or, if those among whom he is directly to labour are ready for him, they are surrounded by subtle foes whose one great object is to defeat his work.

The Apostles had lately seen that, even with our Lord Himself, this was so. Their hearts may still have been full of the joys and welcomes of His first period of preaching, when the whole of the country seemed to throw itself at His feet, and no voice was lifted up to check their devotion. Such dreams as those which they had entertained of the easy triumphs of His Kingdom over the hearts of men are not easily dispelled. It takes much experience to know the diabolical malice with which the preaching of the truth is always met in this world. They might have been ready enough to persuade

themselves that the malignant persecution lately organized against their Master would soon pass away, before the invincible gentleness and gracious power of His presence. They may still have dreamt that they were to go forth rather as princes and conquerors among the people, and they may have had bright imaginations of the glorious successes which awaited them. 'Behold,' it had been said to Jeremias when he was first commissioned as a prophet of God, 'behold I have given My words in thy mouth, and lo, I have set thee this day over the nations, and over kingdoms, to root up and to pull down, and to destroy and to build and to plant.'² This mission was one of power and authority, and it was to involve a power of chastisement and destruction as well as of edification and beneficence. There were other such passages in which the power of the new Kingdom of God was spoken of as one of ruling, and punishing, and the like, and some of these may have been floating in the minds of Peter and the rest of his companions. Later than this point in the history we find the two brothers, James and John, asking our Lord whether they should call down fire from Heaven on a city which would not receive them as Elias had done.³ All such dreams vanished in a moment before these simple words, 'Behold, I send you as sheep into the midst of wolves.'

The sheep is used in Scripture, and in common language, as the image of all that is helpless, unable to guide itself, defenceless by nature, and requiring, more than any other animal, the care and assistance of men, of all that is the ready prey of enemies of every kind, of all that is thus naturally a prey because every part of it, so to say, is of use to others, as food, as raiment, and the like. A sheep sent out by itself, even not into the midst of enemies thirsting for its blood, is helpless

² Jer. i. 10.

³ St. Luke ix. 54.

enough, it is easily lost, it wanders away from its fold, it cannot protect or guide itself. Much more is it helpless, when it is sent forth amid wolves. It has neither the strength, nor the cunning, by which other animals manage to evade their foes, or to repel them. It is the natural prey of the wolf. Yet this is the image which our Lord here uses to represent the mission of the Apostles. They are under another aspect the pastors of the people, they are the guardians of the flock, they have to feed it and to guide it to the right pastures, to drive away the wolves, and to give a strict account of their sheep. But yet they themselves are to be as sheep in the midst of wolves. They are not to defend themselves by force, or by any human weapon whatsoever, except those which our Lord goes on to specify when He speaks of the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. But the first lesson they are to learn about their mission is that they are sent forth as sheep among wolves. The people among whom they are to labour are not all wolves, but there will be wolves around to rush upon them and make them their prey. Satan and all his hosts will be against them, but besides Satan, there will be the instruments of Satan, not evil angels like him, but men like themselves. For the Gospel preaching is a hostile invasion on the realm of nature and sense, of the world, and passion, and pride of life, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes. The whole powers of unregenerate nature will be instinctively massed against them, without previous collusion or combination, or arrangement of any kind. The spirit of the world will be aroused and will urge all its forces in a headlong attack on them the moment they appear. Wolves do not need to be provoked by the sheep, or to have any pretext given for their enmity. It is a natural instinct,

and it will at once collect, against them and around them, a host of the most powerful foes, eager not simply to spoil them or enslave them, but to destroy them. They must begin then by calculating on the bitter enmity of some at least of those among whom they are sent, as well as on the protection of Him Who sends them. They must not expect peace from the world. If they find everything smooth and pleasant, they may be sure that there is some flaw in their fulfilment of the embassy on which they are sent. When the wolves are at peace with the sheep, then may there be peace between the ambassadors of our Lord and the powers of this world.

‘Be you therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves.’ These words are the sequel and the consequence of the former. The Apostles are to have the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove, because they are sent as sheep in the midst of wolves. It is because they are so certain of the enmity of the world that they are to arm themselves with the weapons which our Lord has chosen for their protection. These weapons are two, wisdom and simplicity. They must not be wise and not simple, and they must not be simple and not wise. The combination of these two qualities will be their safety, and the guarantee of the success of their mission. We must therefore find the instruction which our Lord desires to give to all Apostolic men in the union of these two images. The serpent is by nature one of the weakest of creatures, that is, it has no weapons of offence and not much power of self-protection except what is supplied to it by its cunning. Not all serpents have any fangs or any poison by which to meet their foes, but all have the subtlety and cunning which enable them to hide themselves, to glide noiselessly from place to place, to elude pursuit, to shelter at least their heads, the vital parts of their bodies, they are most watchful

against danger, and most fearless in sacrificing everything to the safety of the vital part. They seem to be always on their guard, as if they felt that they are in a world of enemies. This is the prudence and circumspection which appear to be recommended in the image before us.

We have an echo of this strain of instruction, in the Epistles of St. Paul, as where he tells the Ephesians, after warning them against having any part in the evil habits, from which they have been delivered by their conversion to the faith. 'See, therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil, wherefore become not unwise, but understanding what is the will of God,'⁴ and where he bids the Colossians, 'Walk with wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.'⁵ The most foolish thing that could be done by sheep among wolves would be to provoke their anger, to give them occasions of attack, to expose themselves unnecessarily to them. So the Christian missionary and apostle must be on his guard to give no offence, to irritate no one without necessity, to give no occasion for misrepresentation or complaint or calumny, and this simple precept covers a very large part of the prudence of such men as we find it illustrated in the lives of the saints. Thus St. Paul's own care to avoid giving offence to the Jews is an instance of this, quite as much as his skill in defending himself by throwing out words which set one part of his judges and accusers against the other part. Under the same head of prudence would come all the care which such men have taken to study the dispositions and tastes of those among whom they are sent, so as to choose a favourable moment for addressing them on topics which may conciliate them, and the like.

⁴ Ephes. v. 15—17.

⁵ Coloss. iv. 5.

Of this also we have an instance in the same great Apostle, when he spoke to the Athenians about their fondness for religion, and took his text from the inscription on the altar raised to the 'Unknown God.' Such wisdom is often shown in the very tender consideration of the saints for those whom they manage by holy artifices to induce to make reparation for the wrongs they have done to others, to separate themselves from the objects of unlawful attachments, or to begin their confessions, to overcome the shame which ties their tongues, by the avowal to them of their own former sins. They win their hearts in the first instance, and then they are able to lead them whither they will. On the other hand they must know, by virtue of this prudence, when to defer or to desist from attempts which are not likely to succeed then and there. And this seems to be in the mind of the Apostle when he speaks of 'redeeming the time,' taking care not to put so precious a good to a bad use, as when it is clear that a man is intractable, or obstinate, or irascible, or ready to pour out insults or imprecations on the inopportune minister of the Divine Word. So again there is one policy, so to say, to be pursued with great people and another with ordinary persons or with the lowest in rank. One way is good for the gentle of disposition, another for men of violent temperaments and haughty characters. There is no place to which a minister of the Word can be sent, which has not about it some peculiarity, there is no character which will not be dealt with more successfully after careful study, there are no classes, which have not some peculiar maxims and prejudices, some tastes to be conciliated, some aversions which must not be touched on prematurely. In all these cases, a mistake in prudence may bring down on the messenger of the Gospel the wrath of the wolves, and thus not only

endanger them in their own persons and frustrate their present work, but make a difficulty for any future attempt upon them for the salvation of their souls. In this case the time is lost and not redeemed. But the time is redeemed, even when the messenger of God refrains from good words for the moment, for these are reserved for future use, and in the meantime the outbreak which might have been brought on has been avoided.

The word used by our Lord in this passage for the wisdom of the serpent and also that used by St. Paul in the passages from his Epistles, just now quoted, is the same adjective which is applied in the opening chapters of Genesis to the serpent which was made the instrument by which Satan tempted Eve to the bringing about of the fall of man. The evil one could not assail our first parents as he assails us, by interior temptations and illusions, for their nature was still sound and without rebellion or division. Thus Satan was forced to approach Eve in the visible form of a serpent, and to utter, as it seems, his hateful suggestions as speaking to her by the organs of the poor reptile. Thus the image of the serpent has passed in Scriptural language to signify Satan himself, who used the serpent for his own purposes by the permission of God. There are among the commentators on the passage before us some who remember this language of Scripture, and who see in this injunction of our Lord a recommendation to be wise in carrying out the great work of the preaching of the Gospel with the same cunning and wisdom which are conspicuous in the dealing of Satan himself, in the seduction and destruction of men. Thus St. Hilary tells us, that as Satan attacked the weaker of the two in sex, and attacked her by means of false promises and the inducement that the new race of mankind should be as

gods, if she yielded to his suggestion, so we are to examine the character and the disposition of those to whom we are sent, and induce them by the prospects of heavenly goods and the participation of the privileges of the Angels, to submit themselves to the will of God and the Gospel teaching. In other respects also we find the natural cunning of the serpent adduced by the Fathers for our imitation, as has been said, its care in protecting its head, its habit of shedding its skin, by which is signified the renovation of our minds and hearts and the putting on the new man, and in the last place, that characteristic which is mentioned in the Psalms, of the serpent that will not listen to the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely. So we are to shut our ears against the seductions of the world, the applause of men, the motions of vanity, the temptations of self-interest, and the suggestions of heresy.

The simplicity or guilelessness of the dove is the other quality which our Lord enjoins on the Apostles and on those who are to come after them in the great work of preaching the Gospel. He carefully selects His images, and thus, as the Fathers have pointed out, He does not say the wisdom or prudence of the fox, which is essentially that of an aggressive and mischievous animal, but of the serpent, which shows its cunning mainly in self-defence. And so again, He does not recommend the simplicity of the sheep or the cow, which is rather stupidity than simplicity, but that of the dove, which has a kind of force and beauty of its own. Nor does He recommend either of these two qualities by itself, but the two together, the one modifying and perfecting the other. The simplicity of the dove is not foolish, but harmless and guileless, for that seems to be the proper meaning of the word used by the Evangelist. The dove is supposed to be without gall, as if

to signify that it had no ill-will and was incapable of malice of any kind. It has strong affections, but they are not such as to lead it to revenge injuries or to do mischief to others. In the moral order in which our Lord speaks, the character here described is that of persons of open and kind dispositions, warm hearts, persons unable to think or suspect evil of others, incapable of forming hard judgments, incapable of duplicity in word or action or intention, always ready to help, never to injure, always seeking a good, high, and beneficent end by simple means, unselfish, unsuspicious, not resentful, averse to concealments and tortuous measures, strong and persevering in their conduct and aims, because of their very simplicity. They grasp the end they have in view firmly, and make all things serve to their purpose without guile and without trickery or intrigue.

The idea which the image of the dove usually conveys is one of softness as well as of simplicity, but our Lord does not tell us to be tender and soft-hearted as doves, but only to be simple as doves. A character of this kind is often amazingly strong and forcible, and at the same time it is liable to mistake its way if it be not conjoined to prudence, as prudence may descend into guile or into pusillanimity, from want of simplicity. We may take the case of St. Paul, whose character is sketched for us so fully by his own writings, as well as by his acts as recorded by St. Luke, as an example of this combination of the two qualities mentioned by our Lord. St. Paul was a strong simple character by nature. He adopted readily, and without much circumspection, the position in which he found himself by education, of hostility to the Church, and thus he lacked Divine prudence in his measures against her. He might have examined the prophecies more carefully, he might

have been less ready to assume the infallible security of the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees under whom he was brought up, he might have looked more carefully into the evidence for the new faith which seemed so strange to him, and thus he allowed himself to be led astray by his own simplicity. He became in fact the tool or instrument of men whose opposition to the Christian religion was based on their own self-interest and on the wickedness of their own hearts, which had been reprovèd by the purity of the Gospel Law. He carried the persecution to lengths which we do not read of in the case of Annas or Caiaphas. Here was a simple character, going wrong for want of circumspection, and yet being, as he says of himself, ignorant in his unbelief. This is simplicity, not harmless.

In the later stages of St. Paul's history, we see on the other hand the simplicity and harmlessness of the dove tempered by the wisdom of the serpent. Some of his measures for his own protection against his enemies read for a moment as if they were full of guile, as when he divided the Sanhedrin assembled to try him by crying out that he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, or again, when he would not submit to the scourging, claiming his right as a Roman citizen, or again, when he appealed to Cæsar. But in these and other instances in his life we have in truth the perfect combination of the two qualities of which our Lord here speaks. The beginnings of his Evangelical career are marked by simplicity. He begins to preach at Damascus, the very city where he was already known as the emissary of the Chief Priests, and where his presence was sure to exasperate the Jews, and then he goes up to Jerusalem itself, as if to brave the enmity of his former associates in their very stronghold. He seems to have expected that the disciples would at once receive him as a

brother, as he had himself turned to them with all the confidence of a brother the moment he had become one of them. He seems to have thought that the Jews themselves in Jerusalem and elsewhere, throughout his Apostolic career, would be as ready to listen to his witness as he was to give it. When our Lord appeared to him in his first visit to the Holy City after his conversion, and bade him go away, because his life was in danger as they would not receive his testimony, St. Paul replied in a manner which looks as if he was surprised at their unwillingness. 'Lord, they know that I cast into prison, and beat in every synagogue them that believed in Thee, and when the blood of Stephen Thy witness was shed, I stood by and consented, and kept the garments of them that killed him.'⁶ He forgot that they would consider him as a deserter and an apostate, and only remembered the circumstances that ought to have made them think that he must have had some very convincing reason for his change. He seems never tired of telling over and over again the story of his conversion, and he seems to expect that every one will take the same guileless view of the facts as himself.

It was the same virtue of simplicity that made St. Paul so fit for the great work which was especially his in the early Church, the securing for the Gentile converts the full freedom which our Lord intended for them. Of course we know that there was no difference as to the point in question between St. Paul and the other great Apostles, nor did the former do anything that was not founded on the action and doctrine of St. Peter when he admitted Cornelius and the other Gentiles to Baptism or when he spoke on the subject in the Council of the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem. But there was a moment at Antioch, of which he himself speaks in the

Epistle to the Galatians,⁷ when it seemed as if there must be a conflict between simplicity and prudence, in the matter of the eating with the Gentile converts, and when St. Peter inclined to the side of prudence. Then St. Paul's simplicity came to the aid of the Gentile Christians. For certainly nothing can be more simple than the remonstrance which, as he tells us, he addressed to the Prince of the Apostles, saying that he was himself a Jew and yet did not live like the Jews, and how then could he think of compelling the Gentiles to live after the manner of the Jews? And yet this simplicity was the very highest prudence in the case before us. It swept away all veils and made it impossible for the practice of the Church to remain doubtful.

It seems to be the force and power and directness which are given by this simplicity which are the qualities so much insisted on by our Lord in this passage. The life of St. Paul, as it is sketched for us in the Acts and in his own Epistles, is a series, it may almost be said, of such acts of simplicity, in which great courage is combined with great gentleness, and in which humility and candour are as conspicuous as strength and inflexibility of purpose. He always went first to the Jews in a city, although he had had so much experience of their bitter hostility. Time after time he presented to them the truths of the Gospel first, before he turned to the Gentiles. It must have cost his affectionate heart much to give pain to St. Barnabas by refusing to take his nephew Mark as a companion after he had once left them in the midst of the dangers of their Apostolic enterprise. But here again we see his simplicity, combined with prudence, and giving him courage to act in the most prudent way. There is the same combination

⁷ Gal. ii. 14.

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in his conduct at Philippi, where he forced the magistrates, who had acted illegally, to humble themselves, and come and beg the Apostles to depart out of the city in comparative honour. The two qualities are combined, again, in his conduct at Athens, where he might, not improbably, have been in some danger of an adverse sentence from the Areopagus. But he most simply proclaimed the plain truths, which could not but find an echo in the consciences of many who listened to him—the truths concerning the unity and spirituality of God, the responsibility of men, and the future judgment. He awakened up in the hearts of the philosophers the principles of natural religion, which was the ground common to them with him, and on which he could build, if time were allowed him, the whole system of revelation. These truths were unpalatable to any who heard him who had bad consciences, and who did not wish to leave their sins, but they could not easily be set aside as foolish, much less could they be made the grounds of a serious charge against him, while, at the same time, they were the very truths from which they must start on their way to higher knowledge concerning God.⁸

The same may be said of the incident already referred to, when St. Paul divided the assembly of the Jewish authorities, before whom he was to be tried, as St. Stephen before him had been tried, by crying out that he was a Pharisee.⁹ He said more than that, for he added that he was being accused for the sake of the truth of the resurrection of the dead. For God had selected the Resurrection of our Lord as the fundamental proof of the Divinity of His Mission, not simply as being the greatest of miracles, but also because it was the principle and beginning of the new Creation and Life, of which our Lord had so often spoken, which

⁸ Acts xv. 38 ; xvi. 37 ; xvii. 22.

⁹ Acts xxiii. 6.

had been the cherished hope of all the older dispensations, the desire of the Prophets and ancient Saints, the sunrise of the regeneration of all things, for which the whole universe, as St. Paul tells us, groans, and which was thus not a private doctrine of the Pharisees, but the chief treasure of the world's inheritance of truth. It was the truth from which they might have started on their way to the full Christian creed, and therefore its proclamation at such a time, and the discussion which it would occasion, was of the highest importance and profit to them.

In the same way, St. Paul acted with the utmost simplicity as well as prudence in his appeal to Cæsar, as he had acted in the same way when he had warned the centurion in Jerusalem that it was unlawful to scourge him, being a Roman citizen,¹⁰ though he had submitted to that indignity and pain at Philippi without remonstrance. He was at all times ready either to lay down his life for our Lord, or to submit to pain and ignominy for the sake of our Lord, and he would have been especially ready to do either of these at Jerusalem, where our Lord had Himself laid down His life, and where He had been Himself scourged by the Roman soldiers. But his disgrace or murder at Jerusalem might have seriously aggravated the position of the Christians, especially of any Gentile Christians that might be found there from time to time, and, in the case of the conspiracy to take away his life, he had no right to throw away his life or to allow his enemies to stain the land with so great a crime, when he had the lawful right to reserve himself for the tribunal of Cæsar, by an appeal which brought about in a Providential manner his visit to the Imperial City.

The combination of prudence with simplicity in

¹⁰ Acts xxv. 11 ; xxii. 25.

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St. Paul might also be illustrated at great length from his Epistles. It was shown in the resolution on which he seems to have uniformly acted when he was preaching to Gentiles, that of foregoing his claim to sustenance at the expense of the disciples whom he might collect, while he supplied his own needs by the work of his hands. This prudence evidently augmented the esteem and devotion of the Christians for him, and increased, in the same proportion, the envy and dislike of the Judaizing party. Thus it came to be made the source of a charge against him, as if his practice was an acknowledgment of his own inferiority to the older Apostles. This, and other charges made against him, led to those wonderful manifestations of his own heart and interior thoughts and feelings, which are contained in the Epistles to the Corinthians, especially the second of the two. Nor can there be any quality of mind or heart that can be so truly named as the characteristic of those Epistles, as that of simplicity. In the case before us, it is simplicity guided by consummate prudence, for perhaps nothing short of that outpouring of himself could have so completely won round those spiritual children of his who were being led away from their allegiance and affection to him. It is a very bold thing, even for an Apostle, to commit to paper so much about himself, to disarm his critics by the very candour which might seem to furnish them with further materials for their criticism. Such is the prudence of saints—not prudence without simplicity, but prudence guiding simplicity, and clothing itself in all the beauty and the power of simplicity, and divesting itself of all timidity, hesitation, pettiness, and pusillanimity, by its alliance with simplicity.

It may be further observed that our Lord does not simply enjoin on the Apostles this union of prudence

and simplicity, but the union of the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove. The prudence of the serpent is certainly found rather in its care to protect itself against injury, and if it cannot protect itself entirely, at least to protect its vital part, than in any great skill that it possesses for aggression or for injury of others. There might be other kinds of prudence exhibited by other creatures in the pursuit of their prey, and other such ways, and these are not selected by our Lord for the imitation of the Apostles. In the same way, the simplicity, integrity, plain straightforwardness which are recommended in the second clause of the sentence might in some animals be found united with great savageness, aggressiveness, and destructiveness. But such is not the simplicity of the dove. When we turn to the commentaries of the Fathers and Catholic writers on this verse, to find what they understand by this image, we always meet with words which express harmlessness, an absence of ill-will and of all shadow of injuriousness. This, then, is the qualification, so to say, of simplicity as it is here recommended by our Lord in union with the wisdom or prudence of the serpent.

Thus, then, the wisdom of the serpent may guide the Apostles, in the first instance, to protect themselves, sent forth as they are as sheep among wolves, against the many dangers which are all around them, any of which may at once be set in motion on account of the malevolence which is quite certain to animate the world in its dealings with the representatives of God. It is also requisite, not simply for self-protection, because the Apostles have the duty, not simply to protect themselves, but, at the very same time, to bring others over to the truth. They are sheep among wolves, but sheep who must not be content with fortifying themselves in their

own folds. They have to go among the wolves and conquer them. The prudence of the serpent is to guide them in an active line of aggression. That is, all that they do for the cause of God, in which cause they are to be active with a sleepless activity, is so to be done as that no harm may come to their cause or to themselves, to their own souls, or to the principles and truths which they have to inculcate. And yet they are to march on with the utmost simplicity, purity of intention, openness, frankness, absence of subterfuge, dissimulation, or the slightest use of guile. In this onward march they are to be fearless, never discouraged, never daunted, they are not to turn to the right hand or to the left. Here, then, comes in the further element, that their simplicity is to be the simplicity of the dove. As it is to be their rule to guard themselves, their souls, the truths they have in commission, the time during which they have to work, and the like, so is it to be their rule that they are to do nothing that can harm any one. They must often shock, sometimes give offence, sometimes brave the anger of those with whom they deal, and yet, all the time, the good of their souls is to be kept in view, they are not to be provoked to sin, they are not to be scandalized by what they cannot understand, the manifold and mighty weapons of the Christian warfare are so to be wielded by them that they may have no man's blood to answer for. It is better not to wield them with full force, than to wield them as to break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.

It is hardly necessary to point out how powerfully this precept about the simplicity of the dove must modify the policy and guide the exertions of the Church. She is full of native activity, and energy, her resources are infinite, her methods multitudinous, and she knows how short her time is. Each generation passes before

her in rapid succession, and she has to catch the moment for each soul, the time of grace which may so soon pass away, never to return. And, yet at every time of her history, there comes in the restraining knowledge of the danger which souls are continually incurring by their own waywardness or ignorance, lest even her presence should blind by an excess of light, or scare away the sheep that are approaching, however slowly. She, too, holds her peace in the presence of great evils, for fear of aggravating them, she bears for years with a state of things almost intolerable, in the hope that some Providential change may make it unnecessary for her to utter denunciations which will not be listened to. This simplicity of the dove is often laid to her charge, as if it were really an exaggeration, in a bad sense, of the prudence of the serpent. She is charged with compromise, with allowing traditional customs which savour of falsehood, with shutting her eyes to glaring abuses, with condescending too far to temporal princes under whose protection her children may serve God in peace. Wisdom is justified of her own children, but the world is ever ready to misunderstand the simplicity of the dove.

CHAPTER IV.

'Beware of Men.'

St. Matt. x. 17—20 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 70.

It may be supposed that, when our Lord told His Apostles that they were sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves, He did not think of men only, but of the still more powerful and malicious foes among whom their work would lie. For their fighting, as St. Paul says,¹ was not to be against flesh and blood, but against the spirits of evil. Now, however, He adds the special warning that they are to beware of men, and He predicts to them treatment at the hands of men, for which their minds could hardly have been prepared without this warning. They had indeed seen, to some extent, already, the manner in which He had Himself been received by the holy nation, to whom He had been sent by His Father. They could not well expect that their own reception would be more favourable than His. At the same time, they could not but still be conscious that they were the ambassadors of peace and love, that the message from God which they had to deliver was a message of the greatest possible condescension and mercy, the best tidings that had ever been put into the mouths of men to deliver to their fellows. They had nothing to gain, and they sought nothing, for themselves. They were simply sent to proclaim the fulfilment of the prophecies, the advent of the long desired promise,

¹ Ephes. vi. 12.

the news to men of salvation from their enemies, and from the hand of all who hated them. Moreover, as our Lord Himself had been commissioned to accredit His Mission by a wonderful display of miraculous powers, in the way of mercy and relief, of every kind, to the ordinary ills of humanity, by which the spiritual blessings which were contained in His Kingdom were foreshadowed, so they also had the same commission, and they were instructed not to be sparing in the use of the powers given to them. This was another element in their mission which would be sure, it might have been thought, to win the hearts of men, and prepare them to welcome the messengers of God with alacrity and gratitude. Nothing might be further from their thoughts than that they were to be received with hostility, suspicion, fear, as if they had been the preachers of evil rather than of good, the ambassadors of the enemy of mankind, rather than of the Lover of souls. It is against the danger contained in their unsuspectingness of the fact that they were to be received by men as He Himself had been received, that our Lord now proceeds to warn them, and in them the Apostolical labourers in the Catholic Church to the end of time.

'But beware of men! For they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and before kings for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what you speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.' These words, then, convey not only a warning, but a precept and a prediction. The warning is, not to trust themselves to men, for they are certain to ill-treat them. The prediction is of the particular kind of ill-

treatment to which the Apostles are to be exposed. The precept is that they are not to take thought how or what they are to speak when they are before the tribunals to which they shall be taken, and before which they shall be charged. And the reason for this injunction is added, that it is not they who speak of themselves, but the Spirit of the Father Who speaketh in them.

The word which is used by St. Matthew to express the warning here given by our Lord would be most properly rendered by the English phrase, take heed as to men, or of men. It is a word that expresses not so much the care that is to be taken against a known and invariable danger, as the heed that is to be taken as to something that may be dangerous. The Apostles are to be vigilant, on their guard, heedful how they deal with men. The word is sometimes used in a good sense, as when St. Paul tells St. Timothy² to attend to reading, and the like. The warning is one which seems to enjoin that sort of conduct in dealing with men which is described, in our Lord Himself, by St. John, when he says, that many believed in Him on His first public visit to Jerusalem, at the beginning of His Ministry, 'seeing His signs which He did, but Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need that any should give testimony of man, for He knew what was in man.'³ This knowledge of men was a part of the endowments of the Sacred Humanity, as well as inherent in the Divine Nature of our Lord, and it was because it was not natural to men and therefore wanting in the Apostles, who could only learn what is in man by experience, and at the cost, therefore, of much suffering and danger, that our Lord now gives them this warning for their guidance.

² 1 Tim. iv. 13.

³ St. John ii. 24, 25.

It was necessary for them that they should have some such assistance from Him Who knew what was in man.

Our Lord shows in other places this Divine knowledge of the human heart, as when He told Nicodemus that 'this is the condemnation or judgment of those who did not believe, because the Light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, for their works were evil, for every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved,'⁴ thus putting as it were His finger on the wound, in consequence of which it was that men did not welcome Him with joy and thankfulness. In another place, as St. John tells us, He gave a similar reason for the unbelief of the Jews of Jerusalem, when He said, 'How can you believe, who receive glory one from another, and the glory that is from God alone you do not seek?'⁵ This truth lies at the foundation of the treatment of the Apostles and of their followers on the part of the world. People do not begin in conscious hatred of the light, for, if it would leave them to themselves and not interfere with them, they would have no quarrel with it, and perhaps would admire it to a certain extent, on account of its beneficial effects on society and human life. But when it is preached and brought home to them by the ambassadors of God, they feel instinctively that it makes a claim on their allegiance, and even threatens them, by reinforcing the remonstrances of their own conscience, against whatever is irregular in their lives. Thus their evil habits, the connections and the pleasures to which they are addicted, are in danger, and all the lower interests of their nature are moved and roused in opposition to the light and to those who are the means of its approach to them. Thus light is never

⁴ St. John iii. 19, 20.

⁵ St. John v. 44.

a simply welcome boon, except to those whose hearts and consciences are free from self-reproach and from attachment to earthly things, and these are always the few. An Apostle is always an invader, his presence is a threat, and there are no instincts, in the creation which God has made, so keen as to the presence of such danger, as the degenerate instincts of sensuality, worldliness, pride, covetousness, selfishness, and the like. Thus men are always to be approached, not simply as sick persons are to be approached by the physician who has the blessed power of healing them, but rather as sick persons who are also violent and half-mad, and who are always likely to turn on the physician and tear him to pieces, even when he has no other object in view but that of doing them good.

Another feature in the picture, as it is drawn for us by our Lord in this passage, is that of the kind of assaults which are likely to meet the advance of the Apostolic labourer in his zeal for souls. Our Lord does not simply say that men will attack them and ill-treat them, but that they will deliver them up in councils and scourge them in their synagogues, and that they shall be brought before governors and before kings for His sake, and for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. And it is certainly remarkable, in the case of our Lord Himself, that He was not got rid of, so to say, by assassination or secret crime, but by the use against Him of the solemn and sacred tribunals of human justice, and of the religious authority of the holy nation. This also He seems to promise to His followers, not so particularly in this first mission of theirs, of which we read nothing of the kind, but in all subsequent time, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles, in which we have the account of the trial of the Apostles by the Sanhedrin, of the judicial murder of St. Stephen, and

of similar attempts on the life of St. Paul by means of courts of justice.

We are so familiar with this and other similar histories, that it does not strike us as remarkable that so it should have been. And yet this particular feature in the manner in which the world was to deal with them, could not have been expected by the Apostles. What had they done, to bring on themselves, not simply the dislike and hostility of men, but persecution on the part of ecclesiastical rulers and civil governors? As for the first, the truths which they were to preach were the fulfilment and accomplishment of the prophecies and promises of God to His holy nation. As for the others, their teaching ought to have been naturally welcomed by and patronized by them. St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, where he lays down the solemn Christian duty of submission to the civil Governor, as the minister of God to man, says that those who wish not to have any punishment from that power have only to do that which is good and they shall have praise of the same.⁶ The Apostles might have said to themselves, that they might have something to fear from the illegal violence of their adversaries, but that in any case they would not fall under the ban of the law. Yet this is precisely the fate which our Lord here predicts for them. It is religious persecution that He promises them in the first place, and, in the second place, He promises them that they shall be taken before civil magistrates and potentates as malefactors and bad subjects. It is not that their enemies will not be glad to rid themselves of them, at any cost, and in any way, or that they will find nothing in their lives to accuse them of on ordinary grounds. It is that the tribunals, whether of religion or of civil government, will be ready to take action against them,

⁶ Romans xiii. 3.

and that this will practically be the method with which they are to be dealt with in the most summary manner. Thus the severe penalties to which they will be subjected will fall on them in the name of God Himself, Whose law they will be accused of violating by their teaching, and again, in the name of civil society, itself the creation of God, of which they will be deemed the 'subverters and destroyers.' It will not suffice them to have made no personal enemies. For they will be treated as the enemies of the truth, of the law of God and of civil society. This is another element in the prediction here made by our Lord, an element certainly not to be expected on reasonable grounds. For the Apostles were not only the deliverers of a Divine message, which crowned and perfected all the former communications of God to man. They were moreover the introducers of a system of life and manners, founded on the highest principles and guarded by the highest sanctions, the tendency of which would certainly be to guarantee society against the many dangers which were undermining it, and to plant social duties on the immovable foundation of a conscientious obligation. So however it was to be, that the lot of the disciples of our Lord might not be different from His own.

It is needless to point out how the whole of history bears witness to the truth of this prediction of our Lord. From the very first the crime of the Apostles in the eyes of the Jews was that they were, so to say, heretics and false teachers against the Law and the Holy Place of the Temple. It was for this charge that St. Stephen was put to death, it was this that brought about the accusation and imprisonment of St. Paul. Wherever the Catholic doctrine has been preached in the presence of an established religion of whatever kind, the great opposition to it has of course come from the priests of that religion,

and, in the second place, from alleged rights of the State. If this is true, even in Christian countries, it was much more natural in the old Roman Empire, in which the Church grew up for three centuries under the savage persecution of the secular power. It was always on account of the transgression of the laws of the Empire or of the State respectively that the persecution was waged. The cry of danger to the State, of infringement of the rights of the State, of an attempt to enslave the State, and the like, has always been, as it is now, the most common cry raised against the Catholic Church. For the State has a natural tendency to act as if it were in itself something Divine, and as if its interests and the obligations to it were paramount, instead of subordinate to those of the Eternal Kingdom of God. It aims at governing everything, even the mind and the conscience, and it will admit of nothing that appears to question its own omnipotence and sovereignty. The rights of the State are sufficiently guarded by the Church. Indeed, there is no security for the State equal to that which is given to it by the influence and teaching of the Church. Nor is it possible that, when rightly understood, there can be any collision between these two powers and kingdoms, both of which are the foundation of God, and protected by Him. But this is not always seen by the foolish and selfish sovereigns and politicians to whom the guidance of the State often falls, for the punishment of the people under them, and thus it is a thing to be constantly expected in human history that there should be persecution of the Church and of the true religion, at the hands of the State.

Again, it seems to be a part of the Providence of God that those who represent Him, and have a message to deliver from Him and in His name, should be frequently brought before the solemn tribunals, in which is enshrined

the power and authority which He has imparted to human governments and society. For thus the message of the Gospel is delivered in the most solemn manner, a manner which makes it impossible that it should be said that the message has not been delivered formally and fully. This seems to be one of the truths included in the words of our Lord which immediately follow, when He says that the Apostles shall be brought before governors and before kings for His sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. He says, in the great prophecy of the latter days delivered on the Mount of Olives, just before His Passion, that the Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony to all nations, and then the end shall come.⁷ This seems to mean that all nations, as such, shall have the opportunity of hearing the Gospel, whether they will listen to it or not, before the history of the world is closed. But there can be no more formal proof that this solemn testimony has been borne by the appointed messengers of God, than the fact that they have been brought before the rulers and governors of all nations, as it is said in the passage before us. It is not only that the message is thus made most public, but also that it is delivered to the official and responsible rulers, on whose conscience it will lie to accept or reject it, in the name of and for the peoples whom they govern.

These words of our Lord may also be taken in another sense, which is suggested by the passage in the account given by St. Luke of the same great prophecy, in which passage he repeats the words on which we are now commenting. He says that before all the great signs of evil coming on the world, they 'will lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors,

⁷ St. Matt. xxiv. 14.

for My name's sake.' And then our Lord adds, 'it shall happen to you for a testimony.'⁸ These words may mean that 'you shall thus have an opportunity of delivering your testimony in the most public and effective manner, you will have your audience secured to you, you will have their full attention, you will have before you the most important personages in the country, and you will also have the occasion of witnessing to the truth in the way which ought to be most dear to you, for it will be at the peril and cost of your own lives, it may be, that you will then have to bear witness. The assembly before which you will speak will be the most august that you can desire, and the issue of your testimony will be public and proclaimed to all.' In this way it has always been the glory of the martyrs, that they should be able to bear their witness to the truth in public, and at the cost of their own blood and life, and there can be imagined no method of testimony equal to this, in its force and influence on the people. Thus in the Acts of the Apostles we find St. Stephen given the opportunity of speaking before the whole Sanhedrin, we find St. Paul able to address himself to the same assembly, to the philosophers at Athens, before the court of the Areopagus, and so, during his imprisonment, he has to speak before Festus and Agrippa and Berenice. The histories of the early centuries are full of such instances. The enemies of the Gospel are perhaps most eager to drag the Apostles or martyrs before the tribunals, for the sake of bringing about their punishment or proscription. But God uses their malice for the purpose of giving to His messengers the great opportunities which they might otherwise have desired in vain. And thus large multitudes become, in turn, witnesses to these messengers of God that they have done their duty, as St. Paul says to the Ephesian

⁸ St. Luke xxi. 13.

priests, 'I call you to witness this day that I am clean from the blood of all men, for I have not spared to declare unto you all the counsel of God.'⁹ And again, besides the great object of the messengers of the Gospel is to gain an audience, and have an opportunity of setting forth the truths which they have to deliver, as plainly and as publicly as possible, and then in the second place, if so it pleases God, of sealing their witness with their own blood. Both these objects are brought about by the Providence of God of which our Lord speaks.

The same truth explains to us the urgent manner in which our Lord, here and elsewhere, insists on the precept which now follows, of not taking care beforehand how they are to answer or what they are to say. It is not that they are not to be always ready to give an account of the faith that is in them, or that they are to be usually careless in studying both the details of their message and the character of those to whom it is to be delivered. This will constantly make it necessary for them to change their manner of propounding their message, by adapting themselves to the circumstances and conditions of the people, which are so different in various places and countries. This is a part of the obligatory study and preparation of the Apostolical minister of the Word of God, and our Lord cannot mean that this is ordinarily to be neglected. He seems, therefore, to mean, that when He acts thus providentially in giving them the occasion of witnessing to Him, in so solemn a manner, He desires also that the defence of the cause which they have to plead should be left to His own wisdom and prudence, as if He were, in a manner, bound to assist them most specially and to speak in them. In this place He says, 'and when they shall deliver you up,

⁹ Acts xx. 26.

take no thought how or what you are to speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what to speak, for it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.' In the similar passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, our Lord says, 'Lay it up therefore in your hearts not to meditate before how you shall answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist and gainsay.'¹⁰

The language of both these passages seems to forbid all anxious and careful thought beforehand. And certainly it must have been an immense boon to have it enjoined on men under similar circumstances to be free from all anxiety and care. For any timidity, or any over caution, or too much sense of responsibility, might take away from the martyrs and confessors, under such trials, the freedom and boldness of speech of which we have so many instances in history. It would be a great weight on any one to have to think that the cause of the truth depended entirely on his own prudence and skill, and at the same time to have the pressure of the consequences to himself of the free confession of the truth weighing upon him. On the other hand there are no occasions on which it is more important for the mind to be perfectly free from fear and anxiety. Now this freedom is secured by the precept of our Lord, which implies a very great promise of Divine assistance in so special a degree. St. Luke seems to have had this promise of our Lord in his mind when he described the effect of St. Stephen's words on his adversaries, 'they were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit that spoke.'¹¹ And it certainly gives a special interest to such speeches as that of the proto-martyr, to think that at the time the martyrs and Apostles were specially guided, not only in the general line of their defence, but in the very words and arguments which

¹⁰ St. Luke xxi. 14, 15.¹¹ Acts vi. 10.

they used, and above all, in the spirit and courage which animated them to speak so boldly and fearlessly.

That great burst of indignation, for instance, with which the defence of St. Stephen closes, beginning with the words, 'Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Ghost, as your Fathers did so you do also,' could hardly have been ventured on without some special guidance of the Holy Ghost. And the same may be said of some of the speeches of St. Paul. The same characteristic boldness is remarkable in many of the speeches of the Christian martyrs, as recorded in the ecclesiastical annals. The position of confessor of the faith seems to give them an authority; a right to rebuke and reproach, a power of expression and a penetrating force of language which certainly would not be looked for in them under other circumstances. It is the Spirit of the Father, of the Lord of heaven and earth, the Master of the world, the Sovereign above all earthly kings and princes, Who is a thousand times further above the kings or governors before whom the martyrs stand than they are above the lowest and meanest of the people that they govern, that finds expression in the words of the simple maiden, or the child, or the feeble old man, who in a few moments may be sentenced to an excruciating death, and who yet speaks to the man, on whose word life or death depend, as if he were the dust beneath his feet. And it is easy to see how much of this singular power and majesty of the words of the martyrs might have been lost, if their defence had been the fruit of their own study and premeditation. This great gift is promised, not beforehand, but in the hour in which it is needed. For it is not the way of God to furnish His saints with the strength or the wisdom they may require, before the time comes for its use. Thus it is no reason against confidence in the prospect, even of such trials as

that here spoken of, that we do not feel in ourselves beforehand the force and courage necessary for such occasions. Our Lord does not promise them to us beforehand, but at the time. And the histories of these trials are full of instances in which it has been the very weakest and the least courageous by nature who have had this might and freedom given to them, in order that, as St. Paul says of a case somewhat similar, 'the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.'¹²

Our Lord goes on yet further, in His warning as to what the Apostles and their followers had to expect. Not only would the authorities, civil and religious, be armed against them, but they must look for the same hostility, even from those naturally the nearest to them. 'The brother also shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son, and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall put them to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. But he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.' It seems a strange thing to say, that the profession and preaching of the truth which comes from God, and is so full of blessings to man, raising him, strengthening him, enlightening him, ennobling him, showing him the way to Heaven hereafter, and to peace of conscience now, should have this power of dulling all natural affections and of making those to whom the delivery of the gracious message is committed, the enemies of the human race. But our Lord assures us that so it is to be, and the experience of the Christian centuries abundantly fulfils His prediction. The reason lies in the few words already quoted from the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus. Light has come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. The corruption of the human heart

¹² 2 Cor. iv. 7.

makes it love its unlawful pleasures and worldly pursuits, which are incompatible with purity and justice and charity and temperance. Thus, when the light comes in any form it is unwelcome, but when it is forced on men with power and authority, when it is accompanied by evidences of a Divine mission on the part of those who are its ministers, it is instinctively felt, not only to enlighten but to threaten, and to threaten with great power, and to call up in the soul to which it is addressed feelings of fear and terror as well as of repugnance. It is an enemy which must be got rid of at all hazards, and when this is the case, nothing in the way of natural affection or natural duty is strong enough to pacify the resentment and impotent rage with which the whole kingdom of the passions and the worldly instincts is stirred up, to crush the importunate and hateful messenger of the truth.

Men are not really indifferent, when the light is brought nigh to them. It irritates them and infuriates them. And then it matters little to them whether the witness to the truth comes from the voice of a brother, or a father, or a child, or from that of some one who is altogether a stranger to them. The voice must be silenced, whosoever's it may be, and it is even more infuriating, if it is one well known and accustomed to speak in accents of affection and love. Men are more angry then, because the witness contains in itself a greater amount of reproach. It shows them that one just like themselves has had the grace to listen, which grace they reject, and there is often also some greater element of danger, in times when the adherents of the truth have to suffer, when one of a family is found among the witnesses to the truth. Nay, there have been cases in which still lower motives have come in, and when the brother or the child has lifted up his hand

and voice against the brother or the father, for the sake of earthly gain for himself from the removal or spoliation of the other. There are stories in the lives of the martyrs in which this truth is illustrated, when parents have denounced their children, and children their parents, and when the disappointed lover of some Christian virgin has revenged his own rejection by bringing about her death under terrible torments. There have even been times when heretical persecutors have sought to trade on these basest elements in the corruption of humanity. They have promised the estates of Catholics to their nearest relatives, if they will themselves apostatize, for the sake of the good things of this world thus ignobly held out to them. The root of all the misery of which our Lord here speaks lies in the attachment to sin, which cannot bear the approach of that which rebukes it, and denounces it as folly and an imposture. And then other elements are added by the malice of persecutors, or by the social and temporal advantages which are imperilled by conversion, or which may be gained by denunciation or betrayal.

The hatred of all men, which is promised to the Apostles, in the words which follow, seems also a most surprising reward for the charity and zeal and devotion of men, who sacrifice all that is pleasant to human nature for the sake of preaching to their fellows the glad tidings of the Gospel of salvation. And yet this too has been fulfilled in the history of the Church. History tells us how, quite early in her career, in the world, she became the object of immense hatred, partly on account of the message of truth committed to her, but very mainly also on account of the enormous power of lying which was set in motion against her from the very first. Something has been said on this point in the concluding chapter of the last volume of this work, and we cannot form a

full estimate of the powers which are ranged against Apostolical men without the consideration of the importance of this element. Men are already disposed to believe evil of that which threatens so alarmingly their favourite pleasures, and declares the world, which they love so much, to be a lie. Then there comes the calumny or slander against the Church herself, or against the ministers of the Church, the misrepresentation of her doctrines and practice, the imputation to her of the most abominable motives, and the like. The inventive faculties of the imagination never stretch themselves so far, and with so much success in obtaining belief, as when they are applied to this subject. The worship of the gods is at stake, and all the false delights which make life worth living. The State is in danger, society is undermined, a despotism of a class of priests is to be set up, the purity of the home, the independence and the freedom of the intelligence, all the great conquests of humanity are threatened with extinction. The religion of the Christ is really atheism, or scepticism, or socialism. The rights of property, the independence of national life, all the glories of the past are in peril. The Jewish priests thought that the Romans would come and take away their place and nation. The Romans thought that the worldwide Empire, the finest and noblest thing that the history of the world had seen, would crumble into dust. All law, all right, all justice, all prosperity, would be destroyed. And yet, absurd as all these fears are now seen to have been, they are echoed, at this day, all over the world, and the Church is still the enemy of progress and light and all human good, because she strives to make men happy here in the true way, which will also secure them a happy eternity.

The one remedy or safeguard for the Apostles, under this prospect of continual and universal hostility, is

patience, as He says elsewhere, 'In your patience you shall possess your souls.' For as there is no attribute of God which is so wonderfully illustrated by the history of the world and of the Church, as the Divine patience, so there is no virtue, in imitation of the Divine attributes, for which the servants of God have more constant and abiding opportunities, than patience. God bears with the shortcomings of His friends and of those who represent Him in the world, shortcomings to which are to be attributed in large measure the failure of His grace among men. He bears with the ambition and selfishness of prelates, with the infidelities of priests, with the tepidity of religious, with the coldness of souls for whom He has prepared all the great banquet of gifts which is ever spread in the Church, and who yet turn away from that bountiful provision to wallow in the mire of sensuality, or to follow the imaginations of their own hearts in the mazes of error. He bears with the neglect, even with the profanation of sacraments, the resistance to the word of the preacher and the counsels of the confessor. He bears with disobedience and rebellion, and open preference of the world and the lowest appetites to the pure precepts of the Gospel. He allows the misuse of all His gifts, He allows the perversion of all His truths, mockery of and parodies on His holy institutions for the salvation and perfection of men. He does not destroy at once those who insult Him, or defy Him, or even worship His enemy in His place, who teach falsehood against His Church in His name, who deny His very existence, or His goodness, or His mercy, or who rail against His justice, or who defy His power. He bears with blasphemy and heresy, with the doctrines that make Him out to be a tyrant, or which teach that He is cruel, and has created men in His own image for the purpose of damning them

for ever. No insult to Himself, no outrage on His Church, no degradation of the nature of man which He has made, but God will pass it over. Indeed, of all virtues of which the Christian character is made up, there is abundant and frequent occasion for the exercise on the part of His servants. But for that of the virtue of patience there is never a time which does not require its exercise, never a time when men are not continually provoking His servants to cry to Him that fire may descend from Heaven on the enormous wickedness of the world, but that they are constrained both by His precept and by His example to bear patiently until the end. And so great is this virtue in His sight, and so dear to His Sacred Heart, that our Lord here promises to patience perseveringly exercised, under the circumstances under which the Gospel has to be preached, the reward of salvation, as if that alone were enough to secure whatever other virtues may be necessary for that great end. 'He that shall abide, bear, sustain, unto the end, the same shall be saved.'

Our Lord adds a further instruction, with reference to the persecutions which He had been predicting. This instruction settles for them and for their successors in all time a question of the highest importance, as to which there might otherwise have been much doubt among the Apostles and others after them. It relates to the line of conduct which they were to follow, in the case of the persecution making it impossible for them to preach the Word of God with any hope of success. He had already told them to shake off the dust from their feet in the case of cities which would not receive them. But there might be, in cities in which they were subjected to persecution, some part of the population which was not averse to listening to them. Thus it might become a question, whether they should remain in such places under the

pressure of persecution, or pass on to new scenes, leaving the few faithful whom they might have converted to the care of others. Our Lord's instruction to the Apostles in this place is clear and precise. 'And when they shall persecute you in one city, flee into another. Amen I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities of Israel till the Son of Man come.' The last sentence gives the reason for the first. The Apostles have but a short time in which to accomplish a very great work, and in consequence of this, and not from any considerations simply of their own safety, they are to leave the city in which they are persecuted, and carry the Word of God and the opportunities of grace to other places, where they may perhaps find a more favourable opening. So swiftly will the end of their time come, that they will not have had time to go through even the cities of Israel before the coming of the Son of Man. Their great business must be to preach the Word of God to as many as possible, instead of waiting till they can win round the opposition in one particular place. The whole world will be before them, and there will be no time for loitering when in one place the Word of God is hindered, and there are others where it will not be hindered.

This is the general import of this command or counsel. For it is a command in some cases, a counsel in others. And there may even be cases in which it may be incumbent on the ministers of the Gospel not to take to flight in the face of persecution, that is, when they are in a place, not simply as Apostles, but as the fixed local shepherds of the flock. In such cases it may be their duty to remain at their post under all trials, rather than forsake the flock committed to their care, if there is no other reason for their flight than the simple existence of persecution. In some cases the remaining exposed to the danger of persecution may involve danger to their own

perseverance, as it is said of some of the saints, that they fled before the persecution lest they should fall under it. For no one ought to brave the danger without reason. In other cases, even the pastors of a particular Church should take flight, because on them may depend a great cause which is the cause of the Church in their days. Such was the case with St. Athanasius, who, although he was pastor of the flock of Alexandria, was still more the champion of the orthodox faith concerning the consubstantiality of the Son of God, and, if he had been removed, the Arians and Semiarrians would have had a great triumph. There was no danger to the faith by his absence from his own see, and his people could be supplied with the sacraments and the orthodox teaching in his absence. It is in the case of such dangers in these essential matters that the pastors of the flock must remain at their post, as also in such cases of danger as the prevalence of some deadly epidemic or famine, when the bishop may do so much for the support and the relief of the faithful, and at all events may set to others, especially among the clergy, the example of self-devotion.

The point of time spoken of by our Lord as the coming of the Son of Man has been variously understood by the commentators, as there is no doubt that the words bear various meanings in the New Testament. This mission of the Apostles was for a short time, at the most, a few weeks, and it must have been literally true that they could not have passed through many of the cities even of Galilee, before our Lord recalled them to Himself. This however is not spoken of in the Gospels as the coming of the Son of Man, and the Apostles seem to have come back to our Lord naturally, after the news of the designs of Herod against Him. Others have understood our Lord to speak of His Resurrection, the return of the Son of Man from the grave, and

in this sense He is understood of the preaching of the Apostles before the Resurrection. But the most simple manner of understanding these words seems to be that which takes our Lord to speak of the necessary and final termination of all work of Apostolic preaching among the Jews, by the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Jewish nation at the hands of the Romans under Vespasian and Titus. This is more than once spoken of by our Lord as His Coming. It was the end of the drama, so to say, of the Jewish history as a nation, and it was His coming, because it was the solemn and divinely appointed vengeance of God, taken on them for the judicial murder of our Lord, a murder the work of the whole nation, the people as well as their rulers taking up the dreadful cry, 'His Blood be upon us and upon our children.' And our Lord tells the Apostles that they will not have had time to convert the whole nation, or even to go through all its cities, before this great act of Divine vengeance. And as a matter of fact, we hear very little of the Churches of the faithful in Judea and Galilee in the early years of the preaching of the Apostles, though it is highly probable that there were Churches all over the Holy Land. But many persecutions intervened, and it seems certain that, in the time which is embraced by the Acts of the Apostles, which bring us some years on in the reign of Nero, the Christians in the Holy Land were severely tried by poverty and persecution, so that the Church could not be said to flourish among the people of that nation. Thus, although there might have been time for the conversion of all the nation, if there had been no other obstacles to the preaching of the Apostles, our Lord's words were most true prophetically, and the Gospel had not been brought home to the whole of the nation when the day of vengeance came.

The words of our Lord, of which we are now speaking, seem to contain a principle of far wider application than might be seen in them, if they were limited to this prediction of the swiftness with which the Divine vengeance falls on nations and on communities. They seem to imply that saving of time, and the care not to waste the power of the Apostolical ministry on fields of labour where it will not be met by any readiness on the part of those to whom it is addressed, are always elements to be considered in the guidance of those who have this precious work placed in their hands. Our Lord's words about the fields being white for the harvest, and about the harvest being plenteous, but the labourers few, may be supplemented by the passage before us, which implies that the time for the harvest is short. The period during which the Church is to do her work in the world is not unlimited. She cannot afford to waste her energies on the obstinate, while there are others waiting who will not be obstinate. She cannot afford to see her preachers cut down, one after another, by the sword of the persecutor, when their training costs her so much and when there are so few to train. It was only by acting on this principle that St. Paul and the other Apostles got through, so to say, the work for which they were sent. Thus we find the great Apostle sent by our Lord to the Gentiles, because the Jews would not receive his testimony to his Saviour, and the course of his ministry in Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece, and elsewhere is a continual change of place and scene of action, the change being most generally brought about by the necessity of flying before persecution of some kind.

Moreover, this saying of our Lord, which sounds at first hearing like a simple prediction of the lot which is to be that of His followers in the ministry, contains also a tacit promise which has been constantly fulfilled in

the history of the Church. This promise is that the Word rejected in one place shall be well received in another. It is a part of the Providence of God to see that the ministry of the Divine Word is not always and everywhere inefficacious, notwithstanding that it has against it the passions and the prejudices and the interests of men, as far as this world is concerned. It is the Word of God, and must not be unfruitful. And so, when He enjoins on the Apostles, and through them on their followers, not to remain too long striving with a rebellious and hostile population, He implies that in the place of these unwilling and obstinate hearers in one place, they will find others more willing and more docile in another place. And such, as has been said, is the witness of the history of the Apostolical preaching. There is a law of substitution in the kingdom of grace, and the privileges and truths which are not accepted by one city, or by one nation, are offered to and accepted by another. The Church never loses altogether and everywhere. If one nation turns away from Catholic Unity or from the privileges of the Gospel kingdom, another takes its place in the list of the obedient children of the Church. When there are large losses in countries already Christian and Catholic, there are proportionate gains in countries which have hitherto been heathen and altogether alien from the fold of Christ. And thus the Gospel preaching can never be allowed to be idle, because it is never to be unfruitful, and if persecution drives it from one place, the very fact of such persecution is a promise of success in another.

This part of the charge on which we are now occupied is concluded, as it seems, by our Lord by a very tender and touching reference to the lot which He had Himself experienced in the preaching of the Gospel. The Apostles had now been with Him for many months,

and they could call to mind how it had been with Him. He tells them that they cannot expect, and indeed ought not to desire, that their fortunes should be any better or more universally prosperous than His own. 'The disciple is not above the Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he is as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household !' Thus He sums up the consideration of the manner in which men will always treat the messengers of God. Our Lord is Himself both the Master and the Lord of those whom He sends. He is their Master both by precept and by example, and they cannot expect to have more success or more hearty welcome among those to whom they are sent than He had with those to whom He was sent. They cannot put the truths of the Gospel in a more attractive way. They cannot win the hearts of those to whom they speak by a more gracious manner than His. They have not the evidence of virtue, and charity, and meekness, of fortitude and intelligence in the comprehension of the difficulties of men, which He showed. They cannot surpass or equal Him in the power of the miracles by which their mission is attested. They cannot rival His ineffable charm or wisdom or self-devotion. Happy indeed if their preaching in all these respects is in some faint way a resemblance and repetition of His !

And again, in the second place, He reminds them that He is their Lord as well as their Master. He might, if He so chose, leave to them the burthen and difficulty of the work, and content Himself with directing them and seeing them fight for him. He might treat them as slaves are treated by their lords, who give them no thanks for their services, but take them as a matter of right and duty, punishing them if they are not obedient

and diligent, but giving them no reward if they are so. Or He might at least make their rewards depend on their success, and not on their efforts and intentions. He might chastise them for failures which were not their fault, as well as not reward them for gains which belong to Him and not to them. These truths underlie the simple words of our Lord in which He speaks of Himself as their Master and their Lord. In truth, He has borne with the utmost patience the perversity of those to whom He was sent, and He has thus given this other head of instruction to His servants, not only what they are to teach, but how they are to bear with the frowardness of those whom they attempt to teach. And in His capacity of Lord, He is always the King of Whom St. Ignatius speaks in his parable of the 'Kingdom of Christ,' Who takes for Himself the hardest labours and the most scanty provision, in the way of food and lodging and the like, as well as in ill-treatment and danger from the enemies, and He only invites those whom He might command to share His own lot in all these respects.

Indeed, it is but little for those servants of His who love Him and appreciate Him, to say that it is enough for them to be as He is. We see this in the answer to the invitation of the King in the contemplation of St. Ignatius to which reference has been made. All who have noble and generous hearts, and who wish to distinguish themselves in His service, who understand the importance of the warfare on which He is engaged, and the immense value of the rewards to which it will lead, are not content unless they are exactly as He is, and share, to the utmost possible degree, in His labours and humiliations. But our Lord leaves this for them to say, and does not say it Himself. He simply alludes to that point in His treatment by men which was prominent at the moment, on account of the recent renewal of the

calumny which had wrought so much mischief among the people. 'If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household!' They were to do much more than call Him Beelzebub, but our Lord refrains as yet from speaking openly of His Passion.

Here, then, the great principle of the personal devotion of His servants to our Lord is gently and tenderly touched on, a principle that was to have the greatest power of all in encouraging them and in eliciting from them the most noble and devoted service. We read sometimes of great commanders who have flung themselves into the midst of the enemy's ranks, into the breach of a beleaguered wall, or into some other place of the greatest possible danger, for the sake of inducing their soldiers to follow them, and risk everything rather than leave them to their fate. So our Lord goes before His soldiers in order to lead them on. He would have these words always ringing in their ears and in their hearts, that the disciples may be never happy unless they are as their Master, and the servants as their Lord—that they may long for the cross, and the chalice of contempt and ignominy and suffering of every kind, in order that they may give back to Him in turn something like the devotion which He has Himself shown for the salvation of their souls. This is the true Apostolical spirit, not simply to do the same work with our Lord Himself, but to do it under the same conditions of difficulty, obloquy, opposition, and persecution. 'It is enough,' He says, as if less than this was not enough, not enough for the loyalty of the servants and the disciples, not enough for the love of their Master and Lord, Who desires to have these like Him here, in sufferings and humiliations, that hereafter He may be able to make them the sharers of His glory.

CHAPTER V.

‘Fear them not.’

St. Matt. x. 26—33 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 70.

OUR Lord had set Himself before the minds of the Apostles, in the verses on which we have just been commenting, in a double light. He had spoken of Himself first as coming or to come speedily, for the purpose of exacting from the Jews the punishment which they were to merit, chiefly by their rejection of Him and by the fearful crime to which that rejection would lead them. He had spoken of Himself also as having been treated by them in a manner which would also be the manner in which they would treat His Apostles. It was to be enough, He said, for the disciple to be as his Master, and for the servant to be as his Lord. The first of these two thoughts seems to be intended to qualify the second. That is, the treatment of our Lord by the Jews was their treatment of One Who was to come ere long, armed with Divine power to exact of them the penalty for that treatment. Their treatment of Him was to be most severely chastised. And this thought seems also to qualify what is said of the treatment of the Apostles by the same persons and by men in general. They were to look forward as well as back. They were to consider themselves as like our Lord in the manner in which their word was to be received, and like Him also in the terrible vengeance which would be taken on those who should ill-treat them.

The one condition was to be considered as well as the other. And, indeed, our Lord had already said that, for those who rejected them, there would be a punishment in the last day worse than that of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In the passage which now follows, it seems as if this thought of the final issue of all the work of God with men were made the reason for the great fearlessness which our Lord enjoins on the Apostles. You are to be like Me, that is enough for you, and that is enough also to make you perfectly indifferent to the treatment you may receive from men. 'Therefore fear them not, for nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light, and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops.' The immediate reason for this fearlessness and openness in their preaching seems to be contained in the words, 'It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the good-man of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of his household?' But the fundamental reason for the same fearlessness and openness seems to be contained in the truth, mentioned just before, of the coming of the Son of Man, whether in the destruction of Jerusalem or in His final advent at the end of the world, of which all other comings of His are merely the shadows and anticipations. The terrible chastisement inflicted on the Jews for rejecting Him, would be repeated, even on a larger and more stupendous scale, in the chastisement of the world for rejecting them.

This great thought of the Judgment must ever be before the minds of the preachers of the Gospel, as we know that, in the case of some of the most apostolical saints, as for instance, St. Vincent Ferrer, it was con-

tinually on their lips, simply because it is in truth always near to every generation. For though the world goes on, no generation lasts, and so the men of every generation are always close upon the end of the world, as far as their own responsibility is concerned. This is a perfectly good reason for the urgent manner in which the saints of God preach the nearness of the end. But there are also others included in this. For among the features of that great day there is no one more remarkable than the revelation of all secrets and of everything that is hidden, the perfect manifestation both of the counsels and dealings of God, and of the manner in which men have acted under those dealings. Let men turn upon the Apostles of Christ as they may, the day of the correction of all their judgments and of the punishment of all their rebellions is close at hand, and, in the light of this truth, it is no cause for fear that they can, in a certain measure, and for a limited time, vent their anger on the messengers of God as on Him Whose messengers they are. The manifestation of everything is the great vindication and, as men say, rehabilitation, of the servants of God, and they will need and desire no more. For that will imply the manifestation also of the judgment of God upon them, His perfect justification of their innocence, His delight in their virtue, His gratitude for their services, the crown He has prepared for their reward. It will set them right before the whole world, and the more they have suffered now, the greater then will their glory be. The greater have been their courage and their faithfulness, the greater then their honour. The more boldly they have spoken the full truth in the face of all men, despite every danger, the greater will be the tribute and reward paid to them before the whole universe of men and angels.

And, on the other hand, that same manifestation will

be the one adequate and ample chastisement of their persecutors, and the exposure of their folly, the revealing of their base and worldly motives, of the extent to which they have been the slaves of the most ignominious passions. It will show their hypocrisy and their blindness in the face of the whole world. But this great manifestation seems also intended as the spur to the unflinching and unceasing manifestation of the whole truth, as the Apostles have to reveal it. The one divinely ordained preparation of men for that great and terrible manifestation of their thoughts and hearts, is the manifestation to them, by the preaching of the Church, of the whole counsel of God. The truth alone can heal the ignorance and perversity of the world, and it is incumbent on the Church, at all costs to the personal safety and comfort of those who have to preach the word of God, that the divine message should be delivered in its fulness. Thus we have found St. Paul in his farewell discourse to the priests of the Ephesian Church, saying in the most solemn manner, 'I take you to witness this day that I am clear from the blood of all men, for I have not spared to declare to you all the counsel of God.'¹ This seems to supply us with the connection between the two members of the sentence now before us. All things are to be made manifest, as our Lord says, and it is difficult to think that He is not speaking of the manifestation of the last day. And because this is so, therefore what I say to you in the dark, preach in the light, and what you hear in the ear, preach upon the housetops, and do not be afraid of those who can only kill the body, but be afraid of Him to Whom you are responsible as others are, you for the preaching of the Word, and they for their reception or

¹ Acts xx. 26, 27. The English words are ambiguous, but in the original the 'all' belongs to 'the counsel of God.'

rejection of it. Fear Him Who can destroy both body and soul into Hell, that is, cast them into Hell for their destruction, and let this fear force you, if ever you should be inclined to shrink back, to preach all the truths committed to you, even those which are most disagreeable to those to whom you are sent. The words remind us of St. Paul's exclamation, 'Wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel !'² Wo to me if it have to be manifested of me at the last, that I have not faithfully and to the utmost fulfilled the commission entrusted to me !

Thus these words of our Lord appear to embrace two great manifestations, one that of the last day, when all things shall be made known to all, and another, the perpetual witness of the Church to the truths which she has to deliver, and which must be fully delivered if the intention of God is to be accomplished in giving her to the world. It would seem also as if this last was the more direct meaning in our Lord's mind of the two. For though the truth of the Judgment to come might naturally make the Apostles fearless in the face of their persecutors, the truth of the necessity of the deliverance of the Gospel message would press on them more directly, in their discharge of the obligation laid on them by the words in which they were told to speak in the light what they had been told in the dark, and to preach on the housetops what they had heard in the ears. The two thoughts are united again in a famous passage of St. Paul in his second Epistle to St. Timothy, where he bids the latter be unremitting in the preaching of the word. 'I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, Who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming and His Kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine, for there shall be a time when they will not

² 1 Cor. ix. 16.

endure sound doctrine.'³ We here seem to touch on a double difficulty in the full discharge of the duties of the Apostolate. In the first place, their message itself was most abundant. The full doctrine of our Lord runs into a number of beautiful and delicate developments, and the very abundance of the treasure which it contains, and its manifold applications to every phase of human life, make it a difficult matter to unfold it in all its details, even to a population of willing listeners. But there will constantly be the further difficulty that the listeners are not willing. Those to whom the Divine Word is addressed for the first time will certainly have been brought up in systems in which primitive truths have been largely overlaid by corruptions, largely impaired by concessions to the natural unregenerate instincts of mankind. It is well if this is not a very favourable picture indeed of their condition, if it be not also that the systems which have grown up in the darkness under which such men have lived, are also stained by diabolical ingenuity, with the consecration of lust and cruelty, and the hideous inventions of evil which grow up around the altars of idolatry. All these things have to be assailed, though they may have taken very deep root, and fortified themselves by their hold on the passions and interests of classes, or of the whole community. There is therefore much to 'reprove' and 'rebuke,' as well as much that is simply new and most heavenly doctrine. And, even in Christian populations, there are constantly recurring times when it is the duty of the Apostolate, a duty especially illustrated by the action of the Holy See in face of the world, century after century, to have to rebuke popular feeling outrunning lawful obedience, an insane passion for revenge, the instinct of revolution stimulated by hardness on the part

³ 2 Tim. iv. 1—3.

of rulers, as well as the lusts and cruelties of oppressors themselves. The warnings of the Vicars of Jesus Christ are almost always denounced as novelties by the generations to whom they are addressed, as has been the case in our own day. The reason is, that the Vicars of our Lord are bound to speak most strongly to each successive generation on those particular points of Divine truth which are at that time the most assailed, and for the vindication of which there is the greatest need.

Our minds faint at the thought of the immense store of unknown or at least forgotten truths which were committed to the Apostles, or in them, to the Church, for the purposes of manifestation. Our Lord seems to begin by telling them that there were to be no secret doctrines in His Kingdom. It was for their prudence and for the prudence of the Church, to see that pearls were not to be cast before swine, or holy things given to dogs. But, apart from the question of prudence, and of the choice of the fitting time for the manifestation of the various classes of truth, there was nothing committed to them which was to be always kept secret. The revelation of the Gospel was for the healing of the world, and the world could only be healed by the revelation of the whole counsel of God, as St. Paul speaks. It is true that the treasure thus committed to the Apostolate was immense in extent. In many respects the Apostles had almost to begin afresh. The moral law itself, although it had been originally given to man, and had been written in his nature and witnessed to by his conscience, was still very largely obscured in the greater part of the world, so that there were direct conclusions from its first principles which were yet not recognized by large portions of mankind. In the matter of purity, especially, the Apostles had to insist on matters which seem to educated Christians perfectly elementary, but as to

which, as we see from St. Paul's Epistles, the Greek and Roman worlds were practically ignorant. It took the Church many centuries to bring laws and customs into harmony with her own republication of truths which had been from the beginning. This exposition of the moral law was one of the things to be made manifest. It was a hard task even this, and yet it would only be taking the human race back to the light which was originally communicated to it, the truths written in its own conscience. Our Lord's words seem to imply this, where He speaks of an 'uncovering' of what had been 'overlaid,' as well as of a manifestation of what had not been hitherto known.

But beyond the full moral law in all its integral beauty, there were new principles of Christian morality introduced by the Gospel, involved in the supernatural elevation of man and in the example of our Lord as the perfect pattern of the manner in which God is to be served. These are embodied in what are called in the Church the counsels of perfection, and these were to work on Christian society to so large an extent, and in so powerful a manner, as to penetrate social life and produce, not only new principles of conduct in individual souls, but also great institutions and recognized communities. Here was another very large field for the declarations of the new revelation to mankind. The issue of this new light was to be of the most practical character, and it would require its constant reassertion, by word and by example, in order to secure success and permanence. We see for ourselves how principles of this kind fade away from the minds of men in Christian communities which are separated from the Church. The paganism which was thus supplanted that its place might be filled by the new creation of Christian society, is always a tree which has been cut down to its roots,

but which still retains its vitality, and is ever ready to shoot forth again in fresh vigour and luxuriance. As it was with society, so also was it to be with the religion founded on the Incarnation. Natural religion, the primitive system of sacrifice and worship, had been fatally overlaid by a detestable growth of superstitions and impurities. It had to be purified first and developed afterwards into a new and most glorious system, not easy of itself to force on mankind after so vile a bondage. The grace of which the Sacred Humanity was full was to be imparted to men by means of sacraments and other visible means of grace. It involved the hierarchy, it involved the Sacrifice of the Christian altar, and a whole arrangement of personal relations between the rulers and pastors of the Christian flock, of which there had been no parallel in any system which had preceded it. Yet the whole of this heavenly teaching was to be insisted on by the Church.

And again, the deposit of doctrine which He was to leave behind Him in the Church, was a treasure which it would take ages, not indeed to hand on, but to develop and explain and make familiar to mankind, in all its details and consequences. The Incarnation involved not only all the truths concerning the Person of our Lord, which had to be fought for by saints and doctors through the first centuries, but the doctrines of the work of the Holy Ghost, of grace, of justification, and a score of the same rank, the whole system of the power of the Saints in Heaven, as well as that of the application of the merits of the Passion on earth and in Purgatory. So also the position of the Mother of God and her most pure Spouse, the relations between the Church in Heaven and the Church on earth, and a number of other similar points, were to be unfolded by the prudence of the Church in their full beauty before the

world, which all the time was to be as hostile to her as it had proved itself to be to our Lord. The truth on all these matters was deposited by our Lord with the Apostles, and it was brought out in their minds and hearts by the action of the Holy Ghost after the Day of Pentecost. This Divine action has never ceased, and will never cease, as long as the life of the Church lasts. We live at a distance of more than eighteen centuries from the Day of Pentecost, and there are still, we may most confidently think, many portions of the deposit of truth which have not as yet received that full illustration by the teaching of the Christian doctorate in the Church, such as we possess in regard to other points.

This is enough simply to call to our minds the amount of truth of which the Apostles and their successors were to be the recipients and the administrators. And it must be remembered, in the second place, that vast portions of this system were things against which the unregenerate man was certain to rebel, even though it is also true that every feature in the system is most beautiful in itself, and also evidently most beneficial and most consoling to man. But we have already seen that man is like a mad-man who is also sick to death, and whose cure is made most difficult by nothing so much as by the certainty that he will turn, with the most passionate and savage anger, on the good physician who wishes and is able to heal his wounds and restore him to health.

Our Lord had in His mind, in far greater detail than we can draw it out, the whole of the deposit of truth which He was to leave behind Him. And He Who knew what was in man, could appreciate, at its full value, the enormous difficulty which would beset those who had the office of communicating to mankind the blessed truths of which we are speaking. Certainly it was enough to daunt the boldest, to have to force the law of

chastity on populations even not further corrupted than the Greek and Roman world. It was enough to frighten the most courageous to have to impose on the proud self-sufficient intellect the duty of faith in simple truths, as revealed by God, and as witnessed to by the Church. It was a great achievement to preach the merit of humility, to preach redemption by means of a crucified God, and the like. It was a difficult matter to make men, with all their experience of the heathen priesthods, submit themselves to the authority of the Christian priesthood, and oblige them to confess their sins as the condition of receiving pardon. All the instincts of national pride and independence revolted against the doctrine of Unity, which required the acknowledgment of a distant Pontiff as the mouthpiece of the Infallible Church, and insisted on communion with the central See as the condition of Christian membership.

These truths which are here mentioned are but specimens of the truths which the Christian Apostolate has to force on the world, and it is not difficult to see that the hearts of the boldest among the Apostolic band may have shrunk from the apparently hopeless task of setting so many unpalatable truths before angry men in whose power they were. And yet of the miracles of the Apostolic work in the world, perhaps the boldness with which the saints have spoken is the most divine. And this courage of the Christian ministry has been manifested by men who were by nature as timid as they were helpless before those to whom they spoke. Over and over again nature must have quailed, and we find St. Paul writing from his prison at Rome, in expectation of his trial before Nero, begging the Ephesians to pray for him 'that speech may be given me, that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in a chain,

so that therein I may be bold to speak according as I ought.'⁴ It seems to be this frame of mind which our Blessed Lord meets, in the passage before us, in which He uses more than one motive of the greatest power to encourage the messengers of the Gospel in their perilous task, bidding them hold nothing back, but give to the message entrusted to them the greatest possible publicity without any fear of the consequences to themselves. These motives are of undying force. They are as necessary in the nineteenth century as they were in the first. The Church has always the same commission, to unfold truths most saving but most unwelcome, she has ever to brand with her condemnation the favourite errors of successive generations, ever to set before their eyes unflinchingly the very truths from which they are most averse.

The first of these motives is the substantial weakness and impotence of men to harm them in any real and permanent way. 'And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul.' After all, the worst that they can do is to kill the body, and there their power stops. They have no power to touch the soul, which is the part of you far more important than the body. The death of the body does not last, it is over in a moment as far as concerns the pain, and it is to be followed by a glorious resurrection and an immortal life. This motive contains far more than is expressed by the simple words used by our Lord. For the death of the body at the hands of the persecutors and enemies of the truth is wonderfully compensated to the body itself, by the glory and blessedness which correspond exactly, though in proportion immensely superior, to the sufferings or tortures which may have been inflicted out of hatred to the faith. So that, in the true interest of

⁴ Ephes. vi. 19, 20.

the body itself, the sufferings of martyrdom ought to be an object of desire rather than of fear. But the truth on which our Lord insists, is that the persecutors can do nothing to the soul. For there is but one way of death for the soul, and that is the way of sin, and to this no one can force another. Sin is the only true and unqualified evil in the world, and, by the mercy of God, the only evil that is beyond the power of man to bring home to us. And His words imply that as long as the soul lives to God in the state of grace, the bliss even of the body is ultimately secure, and that the persecutors do not really and perfectly kill the body, for, by their action, they do but secure to it a more blessed immortality in the company of the soul which they cannot touch. The death of the body is not to be feared, it is a thing that must come in due time by natural causes, and the worst that can be done by man is to accelerate it and by that put an end to the present time of trial and misery.

But our Lord does not simply bid them not fear those who can but kill the body. He adds that they are to fear God, Who can destroy both body and soul into Hell. For He does not wish His Apostles, and those who follow them, to be without all fear. For there are many trials in the work they have to do for which they need the other motive of the fear of God. Nay, perhaps, it is more true to say, that they are never to be without the fear of God, as a pressing and urgent motive to them for the utmost faithfulness in their great ministry. For fear is not incompatible with love, and it may give a power and strength to their perseverance which may increase their fruitfulness and their crown. There is this feeling of holy fear in the parting discourse of St. Paul to the priests of the Ephesian Church,⁵ which has already been quoted, wherein he calls them to witness that he is

⁵ Acts xx.

free from the blood of all men, and also in the passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians,⁶ in which he tells them that he cares little for their judgment or for the judgment of all men, for He that judgeth him is the Lord. And this motive is constantly appealed to by St. John, in his warnings to the Bishops of the seven churches in the Apocalypse. 'But rather fear Him, Who can destroy both body and soul into Hell.' Thus the flames of Hell are set before the minds even of His own Apostles in this place by our Lord. And it must certainly be true that, in the course of the Christian centuries, even the martyrs and the chosen servants of God have often been saved by means of this holy motive, for though not all are called on actually to give their lives for the faith, still all are liable to be so called, and when the call is made it is not one that can be evaded without deadly sin. Thus St. Ambrose says, in a passage which the Church selects to be read on the feast of some of the martyrs, that there is a weakness which is unto salvation, that there is a fear which belongs to the saints. And he bids us imagine the martyr in his time of peril, having on the one hand of him the savage beasts to whom he may be given over as a prey, the white hot plates of iron, the fire of the raging furnace, the heavy chains ready for binding him, and the bloody executioner waiting, and at the same time, on the other hand, for his consideration, the Divine commands, the endless fire of Hell, the torments that never cease, the pangs and the pains which are always new, and he speaks of the danger on each side, the terror of the present suffering, and that of the eternal punishment for yielding to that suffering. Thus even the greatest saints of God have never thought lightly of the motive of holy fear.⁷

⁶ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

⁷ St. Ambros. in Psalm cxviii. (Lect. II. Noct. in Comm. Unius Martyris).

The next argument or motive suggested by our Lord in this passage is that of the immense value of the Apostles in the eyes of God, and the certainty of His protection over them in all the dangers of their ministry. 'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father? But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, better are you than many sparrows.' The argument is founded on the immense care of God for His creatures in His ordinary Providence, even over the smallest and most insignificant things in the universe which He has made. Our Lord had used the same in the Sermon on the Mount, where He told them to consider the lilies of the field, how God clothed them with beauty and glory, and the fowls of the air, how God provided for them in all their needs, and then reminded them that He was also their Father, and that therefore they might trust themselves to Him for protection and provision. He had then been speaking of the counsel of abandonment of all temporal cares, in reliance on their Father's Providence, and now He uses the same consideration to encourage them under their persecution.

It is clear that there can be no exaggeration in our Lord's words about the care which His Father takes of the least of His creatures. If the words sound strong to us, it is because we do not understand the Providence of God. There can be nothing in any of His creatures in itself to make it worthy of a thought in His estimation. The only thing that makes the whole universe worthy of His care is that it is made by Him, and this consideration is found in the lowest of His creatures as well as in the highest, in one single bird, as well as in the whole multitude of men and angels. No sparrow 'falls to the ground without your Father.' Sparrows do fall to the ground, and men like them, that is they die when and

how the Father of all has decreed and permitted, and in the same way the confessors and teachers of the faith will fall and die, when He permits, and not sooner or later. But although no one of His creatures is worth anything in the sight of God in itself, still He has a greater regard for some than for others, on account of the work for which He sets them and the reward for which He designs them. But there is no work in all His Kingdom more Divine and more dear to Him than the carrying on the work which He has Himself begun in the Incarnation and Mission of His Son. It is the combination of these two considerations in the case of the Apostles which gives its force to the reasoning of our Lord in this place. It is not only that nothing can be done without God in the universe, for with that He might still permit great hardships to the preachers of the truth. Nor is it simply the value which He attaches to the Apostles and their work, for that might be without the tender Providence of which our Lord speaks. But it is that He who watches so carefully over the very least of His creatures, has a special value, and therefore a special care, for the labourers in the field of the Gospel preaching. 'But the very hairs of your head are numbered,' that is God sets such store by you that He counts every hair of your head, and will not let it come to harm, unless it is for your greater good and His own glory. 'Fear not, therefore, you are better than many sparrows.'

Our Lord then goes on to add more forcible considerations still, all of which, to the end of this discourse, are drawn from His own love, His own grateful retribution to those who do Him service, and the like. This it is which gives their special tone to these remaining arguments. The first is from the return which He will make to those who have borne His name and suffered for it before men. 'Whosoever therefore shall confess

Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father, Who is in Heaven, but whosoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in Heaven.' The confession of our Lord before men is the witnessing to Him as our King, our Teacher, our God, and this may be done by the profession of His faith, the declaration of His truth, the maintenance of His law, the propagation of His Gospel, the public obedience to His precepts, the defence of any truth which belongs to His Creed, or of anything that is enjoined by Him or by His Church. Thus the range of this glorious service to our Lord is almost infinite, co-extensive with the whole field of duty and of truth. Thus, then, it may sometimes be the case that the point to which witness has to be borne, may concern the Divine Person and the dignity of our Lord, while at another time it may be some apparently remote conclusion from the positive laws of His Kingdom, or even a simple precept of moral virtue, or the truth as to some matter in itself unimportant. There have been martyrs for the privileges of the Church in temporal matters, or for the seal of confession, or for the precept of not communicating with heretics, or for refusing an unlawful oath of allegiance, or for the true doctrine about sacred images, or for the simple precept of purity, or for the obligation of a vow in itself only a matter of counsel, or for the observance of abstinence on Fridays, as well as for the consubstantiality of the Eternal Son, or for the truth that Mary is the Mother of God. The confession which our Lord will reward has been borne by the weakest of men, by children and women, as well as by the strong, it has been borne by a simple gesture or a word, or by silence, or by refusal to cast a grain of incense on an altar of a false god, or before an image of an emperor. The Machabean martyrs who were put to death for refusing to eat the flesh of swine, were as truly

witnesses to God before men as those who died in the arena because they taught the faith of Jesus Christ. The poor famishing peasant in the West of Ireland, who refuses the gift of the Protestant emissary, who comes to him with food in one hand and an heretical bible in the other, is as true a witness to our Lord as St. Laurence or St. Stephen.

There is a certain equity in the return which our Lord promises that He will make to those who confess Him before men, and yet the proportion borne by the return to the service rendered, is regulated by His own magnificence rather than by the justice of the case. For what service can it be in truth to Him, that we witness to Him, or what harm can accrue to Him if we witness not to Him? And on the other hand, what severity of suffering which it may have cost any one to confess Him, can be compared to the immensity of the glory and blessedness of having His word before His Father that we are His, and that He owes us something? Those are matters beyond the measure of our minds to grasp, and yet throughout the remainder of this discourse, now that our Lord has brought in His own personal part in the work and its reward, we find the same boundless magnificence in His dealings with us. To receive His messengers is to receive Himself, and to receive Him is to receive His Father Who sent Him. A man who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet, or a just man in the name of a just man, is to receive the same reward as if he were himself a prophet or just man. And even a cup of cold water given in His name shall not be without its reward.

The confession of our Lord on earth by His servants is done in a moment, or, at the most, it lasts while the torture is being inflicted by the persecutors, or again, during the brief span of this present life, and then it is over. But when our Lord confesses us before His Father in

Heaven, it lasts on through the whole reign of His Father and Himself, and it is a witness borne before the whole of the inhabitants of Heaven, throughout all eternity. It is known to them all and brings with it glory before them all, a glory which penetrates the whole being of the person to whom this witness is given, which fills every part of him with a new and peculiar blessedness. It is the confession or witness of One Whose word creates what it signifies, and places the happy recipient of the blessing in a new personal relation to Him who bears the witness. A kind look or gesture, or smile, or word, from our Lord, is enough to make the eternal felicity of a soul. But here is the actual confession of a kind of obligation, which involves a payment in the imparting of every kind of good of which the person so witnessed to is capable. The one great joy of the angels is that they stood faithful to God when they had the opportunity of taking His side or of taking their own, so to say, in preference to His. So the one great joy of the blessed companions of the angels from among men, will be that they have professed in their various ways the truth and the faith, and so borne their witness to our Lord. Nothing can illustrate more clearly the pre-eminent merit of faith in the Kingdom of the Gospel.

It is perhaps the mention and the thought of the confession of our Lord before men, that suggests the next member of this discourse, in which He speaks of the opportunities of confession which will be afforded in His Kingdom, by the fact of the many and deep divisions which the principles of the Gospel must inevitably occasion between men. We have seen that they have arrayed against them all the prejudices, the passions, the interests of the world and the flesh, and if this be the case, then, for the very same reason which makes them bring down on their professors the enmity and the persecution of the

powers of the world, they must also divide those who are united merely by natural bonds, however close. The Gospel would not be the Gospel, if its profession by one member of a family led by a natural consequence to its adoption by another member of the same family. Nor would it be the work of grace in the heart which secures its acceptance, if anything else could secure it. Thus it is inevitable that the principle of the Gospel should be a principle of division, in all cases where it is not in such entirely peaceable possession of large populations, as to make it require an effort and a struggle to throw it off. Even in these cases the unity which is produced simply by external pressure of circumstances, can go no deeper of necessity than the power of that pressure. Moreover it is the way of our Lord that the Gospel should be in great measure propagated from individual soul to individual soul, that personal contact and communication should have a great deal to do with the spread of the truth and the progress of the Church. It may thus be truly said, that the conversion of one member of a family is an occasion, divinely ordained, for the conversion of others. It brings home the truth to every member of that family, and to the whole circle of their friends, with a force which might before have been wanting. To hear or to read of the claims of the Church, is a very different thing from having those claims presented to us by the submission to them of our own child or brother.

This may seem to be at first sight in opposition to what has just been said. For there can be in general no more powerful personal influence than that of those who are by nature nearest and dearest to us, and there can be no opportunities of spreading the truth possessed by strangers, which can be compared to those which are in the hands of those of the same family. This is perfectly true, and there are many blessed instances in which the

truth has spread in this way, the conversion of the father, or mother of a family has led to that of their children, that of the brother to that of the sisters, and that of the master of the household to that of those of his household. But in these cases there is a supernatural influence working on the basis of natural affection and influence, and this cannot be always reckoned on, inasmuch as souls differ so much among themselves, and in the degree of their correspondence with Divine grace, and inasmuch also as grace itself is the breath of Him Who breatheth where He listeth, and cannot be taken for granted by any one. All these differences are called into life and activity by the circumstances which we are considering. The influences of the natural ties of which we speak, are manifested in regard of acceptance of the Gospel, in various ways. Some who are very near to those who listen to the Apostolic preaching, are themselves led on to embrace it. They do this with greater happiness and ease, because of the circumstances under which the truth is presented to them in the Providence of God. So there are other instances in which the grace of conversion is wanting, and in these the result is a greater and more bitter division, and one which leads on to the most violent measures against the professors of the faith. If a man's near relatives do not befriend him or catch from him the infection, so to say, of conversion, then they become more bitter in their hostility than they might have been, if what they regard as so great an evil had not come near to their own door. For its simple presence is a reproach, a claim on their allegiance, a profession of a duty which they also are called on to fulfil, if it be a duty. And besides, it often happens, that serious material consequences follow to those who are the nearest in blood and position to the convert to the faith. Thus human and natural love are tried to the utmost, and it

must often happen in the nature of things, that they give way before the new strain, and are turned into hate, which is not found elsewhere.

This is the truth which lies behind the next words of our Lord. 'Do not think that I am come to send peace on earth, I am not come to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household.' It is not of course that our Lord did not desire peace, nor that He did not truly bring perfect peace, both with God and with ourselves and with our neighbours, to those who have the grace to listen to His teaching and conform themselves to His laws. But the world being what it is, and men being what they are, the working of the light and grace of the Gospel on the mixed society of mankind generates the strongest resistance, as well as the most noble obedience. Thus it divides men, according to the state of their hearts, into the most hostile factions. These principles are such that men cannot remain indifferent to them, they must take one side or the other, and the result is that there are feuds and divisions on the subject of religion, which extend themselves so as to tear asunder the most tender of natural ties.

It is needless to point out how this principle of the Gospel preaching makes the occasions of what our Lord calls confessing Him, before men, more common and multitudinous. For by this warfare, so to say, which is introduced into the family itself, by the penetrating power of the truth, which sets men against those who are the nearest to them by natural ties, it is possible, as it is in truth most common, for a great amount of suffering to be undergone even in domestic life, which is, in a most true sense, the result of confessorship for our Lord. For in

this way the witness to the truth which we are bound to bear for His sake, may find its place in the silent protest of virtue against vice, of purity against laxity of life, of modesty in dress and behaviour, against fashion and custom, as well as in the defence of the dogmas of the faith or of the rights of the Catholic Church. So that it is not necessary to stand before princes and governors, or to be presented as culprits before tribunals or in the synagogues. For this witness to our Lord may be borne in the cottage, or in the home of the wealthy, or in the servants' hall, or in the counting office, or at the mess-table of the soldier or the sailor. Wherever there is the division which is the inevitable consequence of the raising a high standard of faith or of morality, there will be the occasion for the testimony to the truth, or to the law of God, which all are bound to bear. And as a fact, there is scarcely a home or a company, in the days in which we live, in which the prophecy which is practically contained in these words of our Lord is not verified.

He adds, moreover, 'a man's enemies shall be they of his own household.' It seems a strange thing that so it should be, and our Lord's words may be understood perhaps, as simply re-asserting what seems so contrary to the gentle and peace-making spirit of the Gospel. Or He may mean something more by this last clause, than is contained in the former words. He may mean, perhaps, to look forward to the countless souls whom He was to call to follow Him in the way of perfection, although the time had not as yet come for Him to speak of the counsels more formally. For in the matter of calls to perfection, whether in a private life or in some religious institute, it was to be constantly and over and over again the truth, that opposition to the following out of such calls would frequently, and

almost inevitably, come from those of a man's own household. There are comparatively few even among Catholic parents, who rejoice to give their children to God in the religious state, and even when there is no actual opposition, still the tenderness of the human heart for those who are so close to us, must of necessity cause a great interior struggle, which may sometimes seriously impede, or even altogether spoil, the vocation of the person in whose soul it takes place. These domestic foes may be such to souls called to perfection, even silently and unwillingly. It is a part of the extreme tenderness of the Heart of our Lord, that He should take care to provide those who are thus called to follow Him, as well as those who are bound by their obligation to the truth and to the faith to profess Him before men, with words of His own so clear and so decisive as to the right course for His children to pursue in all such cases. This is one of the hard sayings of the Gospel, hard in one sense, and full of most compassionate mercy in another sense, and so our Lord has taken it into His own mouth, and not left it for one of His Apostles to speak. And so it has been the support and guide of thousands of thousands of souls, who might have failed under their trial, if it had not been so arranged by our Lord that these words of His should be preserved for us. And so He goes on to add, speaking to the thoughts which might arise in the hearts of so many rather than to the immediate occasion of the mission of the Apostles. 'He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me.'

Our Lord speaks, as always, in the gentlest manner concerning Himself and His own personal claims. He might have said, that to love father or mother

more than Himself was ungrateful, unreasonable, wicked, unfaithful, disloyal, and worthy of eternal reprobation. But He is content to say simply, is not worthy of Me. There may perhaps be some reference to the former words, in which our Lord said that He would confess those before His Father Who had confessed Him before men. For the notion of confessing implies that the person has a claim, and is worthy of acknowledgment. But our Lord must at least be thought to include in His words the sense of worthiness which is founded on what He has Himself shown of love and value to the souls of men by what He has done for them, by being their Creator, and Redeemer, and Brother, their most provident Sustainer and Helper by all the means of grace which He has left behind Him in the Church, means of grace which embody, so to say, the enormous and passionate love which brought about all the sufferings and humiliations of the Incarnation and the Cross, for the sake of these souls. For our Lord gave up for their sake all His glory, all His beatitude, even as man, the rights of His Sacred Humanity, that He might be able to suffer for their sakes, and if men cannot give up for His sake even the most tender ties of earthly affection for a time, and that they may purchase eternal blessings for themselves and for those whom they are bound to love, then they are not worthy of the love which our Lord has borne them. And the words also contain the doctrine of the paramount duty of confessing and following our Lord, a duty which overrides, so to say, the duty which binds children to their parents, and parents to their children, although He puts it rather on affection and love, than on the sense of duty. For however closely and strictly we may be bound to our parents or to our children, the duty which binds us to our Lord is beyond all these, so that there can be no duty at all of loving, or

succouring, or considering, parents or children, which can possibly come into conflict with the duty which we owe to Him.

Our Lord goes on still further, though the words He uses could not have been so intelligible to those to whom He spoke as they are now to us, for the time for Him to speak of the Cross had not yet come. Nevertheless, He uses the words in the sense in which they have long been familiar to Christians. 'And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me.' As the punishment of the cross was not a Jewish punishment, the image with which we are so familiar is one which has taken possession of its place in common language since the Sacrifice of the Cross was paid by our Lord, and does not seem to have prevailed before. Our Lord, therefore, Who had His Passion always in His Heart, was doubtless very familiar with all the details, for this of carrying the Cross is something different from the simple idea of crucifixion, and it brings to our mind the mysteries of the Via Dolorosa rather than those of Calvary. But He must have known that the details of His Passion would soon fix themselves in the minds and hearts of His Apostles and of their followers, and, as He was speaking for all time, He uses this loving and tender image for the daily mortification of the Christian on his road to Heaven. And in this image is contained another tacit allusion to the extremity of His sufferings for us. For instead of saying that we are to mortify ourselves and accept in this world the position and the treatment of condemned criminals, after the example of our Lord Himself, or putting the obligation of daily self-conquest in any other way, He speaks of this bearing of the cross, which would bring Himself to our minds in the most loving and so most powerful manner. For thousands on thousands of

Christian followers of our Lord might be ready indeed, in their mind and hearts, for bearing witness to Him and confessing Him even unto death, and yet it would not be in the providence of God that they should be called on to lay down their lives by actual martyrdom. But, on the other hand, the following of Him, as it were, up the hill to Calvary, would be the common lot and privilege of all who would truly serve Him, whether their cross consisted in outwardly inflicted sufferings, or in the endurance of miseries whether of body or soul, or in their own self-chosen mortifications for the love of Him.

'He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it.' The word which is here translated 'life,' is used indiscriminately in the New Testament for soul, or for life, and it does not seem easy, in any particular place, to judge, except from the context, which of the two is the more direct meaning intended by the writer or the speaker. Thus in the passage which most resembles this in the same Gospel of St. Matthew, where our Lord begins by repeating these same words, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me, for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake, shall find it. For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?'⁸ the Greek word is the same for life in the first part of the passage, and for soul in the second part. And in the passage in St. John, where our Lord speaks of laying down His life for His sheep, and where St. Peter protests that he will lay down his life for our Lord, the same word is used.⁹ We are therefore left in particular passages, as has been said, to

⁸ St. Matt. xvi. 24—26.

⁹ St. John x. 17; xiii. 37.

find out which is the best rendering, and perhaps it is significant that there should be this double meaning of the word, which properly represents our word soul, as it shows us that the true life of man is the soul, the life of the soul. It is also noted that there is a strength about the word probably used by our Lord, and which is rendered in the Greek by the word 'findeth,' which implies a kind of grasping and seizing, as that which takes place when a great treasure is laid hold of as if it were the most valuable thing in the world, for which anything else might well be sacrificed. It is the soul which gives life even to the body of man, which depends on the presence of the soul.

Thus, whenever men sacrifice anything rather than lose their life, what they really preserve or gain thereby is the continuance of the soul in the body. What our Lord seems to mean is, that when this is done, it may be said indeed that the soul is found or retained. So also when life is sacrificed for the sake of God, it seems that it is lost, because the soul is parted from the body. But in these cases there is a contradiction between the thing which takes place and the thing which seems to take place. In the case in which the human life is saved at the risk or cost of sin, as by the denial of God, then the life which seems to be saved or won is really lost, because it is sin which constitutes the true and only death of which the soul is capable. Thus the life is really lost when it seems to be saved, because the principle of human life and existence is itself brought to death. And thus what is lost is gained, what is gained is really not gained, but lost. And in the case wherein the spiritual life of the soul is saved at the cost of the human life of the body, then the life which seemed to be lost is really won or preserved, because the soul is saved from sin, and by the sacrifice of temporal and

earthly life we gain the life which is heavenly and eternal. In this last case our Lord adds the words, 'for My sake,' for there are many causes in which life is spent, or wasted, or sacrificed, in which it is not true that life is really gained or the soul saved. For human life may be thrown away in a bad cause, and then both the life of the body and the life of the soul are lost together. And here this gradually ascending scale of sacrifice for our Lord ends, for it can go no further than the sacrifice of life itself. It begins with the dissensions in families, in which we are to take the side which is required by the rights and claims of the truth. Then it goes on to the finding enemies in a man's own household, which implies an attitude towards those nearest to us of perpetual antagonism. Then follows the love of parents or the love of children set at nought for the sake of our Lord, then the taking up the cross and following Him in the daily battle against the world and the flesh, and last of all the climax is reached when it is said that to lose our lives for the sake of our Lord is to find them, to gain in their respect the highest and truest reward and profit that can be imagined in the Kingdom of God.

Our Lord concludes this discourse with some most consoling statements as to the reward of those who recognize Him in His messengers, or in those who in any way or degree bear His Name. In this series of statements He begins with the highest and goes on to the very lowest case in which these rewards can be earned. 'He that receiveth you, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet, and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man. And whosoever shall give to

drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, Amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.' The very gradual and particular language of these promises shows that there can be nothing rhetorical about them. Our Lord is speaking of the Apostles in the first instance, in their capacity of Divine envoys, and of them He says that to receive them is to receive Him, and to receive Him is to receive the Father Who sent Him. It is not said as to this part of the promise that those who receive the Apostles are to be aware, of necessity, Whose envoys they are receiving. It is enough that they do receive them, that is, with honour, kindness, charity, respect. The majesty of God is so great, that whatever in the way of kindness is done to His messengers, merits a reward, even though men have not fully discerned their character. Thus it was an immense blessing to have received or ministered to our Lord in His earthly Life, even though men did not understand that He was the Son of God, or perhaps, even a Divine messenger. It is not the perception of others that constitutes or secures the union between the Father and the Son, or between our Lord and His Apostles. It belongs to the magnificence of God that no service or observance shown to His emissaries should be without its abundant recompence.

In the case of the other promises, the language is somewhat different, for it is said that the prophet is to be received in the name of a prophet, and the just man in the name of a just man, and the little one who is relieved by even a cup of water, is to receive it in the name of a disciple. That is, those who receive or minister in these cases must do so especially on the account of the character of the prophet as such, or the just man as such, or the disciple as such. The only question that can be raised here, is what is the precise

meaning of the promise that those who receive the prophet or the just man as such, shall receive the reward of a prophet or a just man. The answer seems to be that God, in His great bountifulness, will treat such receivers of those who in some way or other bear His name as if they were themselves endowed with that character, for the sake and honour of which they receive the others. The man who receives a prophet as such shall receive the reward of a prophet, and he who receives a just man as such shall receive the reward of a just man, not simply because he in some measure cooperates with the mission or the work of these servants of God, but because God values so highly them and their work, and the recognition of their character by others, which is what man can do to further His merciful designs in sending them, that He chooses to give the reward spoken of.

We are thus, then, taught that this is a kind of privilege of the Apostolate and of the saintly character of the chosen instruments of God, as it is also their privilege to have what they shall say supplied to them at the time, without their own forethought, when they stand before rulers and kings for His sake, or as it is a part of the privilege of those who perfectly trust God in His providence, as we are exhorted to trust Him in the Sermon on the Mount, to have all their needs supplied by His abundant care. And this tender care of God over those who belong to Him extends, as our Lord tells us, even to the least of those who are His, so far that any one giving such a person a simple cup of water out of charity, for the sake of the character which he bears of belonging to Him, will not be without his reward. If the particular recompence is not specified, it may be because our Lord is speaking of kindness and charity in general, and only

gives the example of the cup of cold water as one of many possible examples. Thus, whatever is done for those who are thus our Lord's own, in the way of kindness, even if it be only a cup of water, will not go unrewarded, according to the kind of service rendered in the first place, and according to the immense liberality of God in the second place.

CHAPTER VI.

The Death of St. John Baptist.

St. Matt. xi. 1, xiv. 1—13 ; St. Mark vi. 12—29 ; St. Luke ix. 6—9, iii. 19 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 71.

WE have now come to a point in the history of the Ministry of our Lord, at which it is well to consider its relation with the onward flow of time. The discourse which has last been considered must probably have been delivered by our Lord at no great distance of time after the teaching by parables, which had taken place near Capharnaum. But we shall soon find ourselves guided, by a few words of one of the Evangelists as to a miracle which took place after the return of the Apostles to our Lord, to another definite point in the history. St. John expressly tells us that the next great miracle with which we shall have to deal, that of the multiplication of the five loaves, was worked about the time of the Jewish feast of the Pasch. There is some ground for thinking that the Parable of the Sower, which is the first of the series of which we had to speak in the last volume, must have been delivered by our Lord just at the time of year when the operations of sowing were going on in the

fields on every side. It is only natural to suppose that our Lord would use what was passing before the very eyes of the multitude, as the foundation of His parabolic teaching. But the seed time was in the early winter, and if we are to take the note of time furnished us by St. John as the other limit of the events comprised in this period, we have nearly four months to account for, between the parables and the feeding of the five thousand, which we know to have taken place after the mission of the Apostles had come to an end. The incidents of the passage of the lake, the legion of devils, the healing of the woman with an issue of blood, the raising to life of the daughter of Jairus, and the other miracles which occurred at that time at Capharnaum, would take a very few days or even hours altogether. Nor can we see reason for thinking that our Lord spent much time in 'His last visit to Nazareth. Thus the charge to His Apostles may have been given within a few weeks of the teaching by parables, and, whether they were sent out immediately after that charge or not, they must have returned to our Lord's side in the early spring. We are left to probabilities only with regard to the date of the separate mission of the Apostles. But we have no doubt as to the occupation of our Lord during the interval of time of which we are speaking, for we are distinctly told by the Evangelists that it was spent in another of His great missionary circuits, round the towns and villages of Galilee. Perhaps He took His Apostles with Him for the first part of this circuit, and then sent them out, two and two, to preach by themselves.

‘And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He passed from thence, to teach and to preach in their cities,’ that is, in the cities of the people of Galilee. ‘And going forth they went about through the towns, preaching the Gospel

and healing everywhere. They preached that men should do penance, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.' This is the general description of the employment of this time. It was a repetition of what had so often been done by our Lord before, a repetition varied by the new circumstance of the preaching of the Apostles as well as that of our Lord, Whose companions, in the absence of the Apostles, were probably some of the more intimate disciples outside the Apostolic band, such as those who afterwards were included in the Seventy-two, who were sent out to preach in the last year of His Ministry. The only new feature in the circuit was this, and the other involved in it, that of the exercise by the Apostles of the miraculous powers conferred on them by our Lord. We have no reason to think that the subject-matter of the teaching was different from that of other similar circuits. They preached that men should do penance, and they preached the Gospel. There does not therefore seem to have been any limitation of the teaching to that parabolic form which our Lord had adopted for a special purpose in His late teaching at Capharnaum. This may explain to us how it is that we have no details of this circuit, any more than of former circuits, though perhaps the absence of the Apostles from our Lord may have been the reason why we have no account given us of particular miracles, which would probably have occurred occasionally, besides those which were, so to say, habitual with our Lord in the course of His teaching.

It seems likely that there must have been many such. For it is now that we are told that Herod the Tetrarch had his attention drawn to the great fame of our Lord throughout the country. 'At that time Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus: for His name

was manifest. He heard of all things that were done by Him, and he was in a doubt, because it was said by some that John was risen from the dead, but by other some that Elias hath appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John I have beheaded, and Who is this of Whom I hear such things? and he sought to see Him. And he said, John the Baptist is risen again from the dead, and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him.' It seems clear that Herod first doubted how to account for the miracles of our Lord, and then came to the conclusion that He was John come to life again with new powers.

It may seem strange that Herod had not, before this time, had his attention aroused by the great fame of our Lord all over the country. But voluptuous tyrants often live in great ignorance of what is of the greatest moment to the people whom they govern. They pass their days in a dream of pleasure and in the indulgence of their worst appetites, and their courtiers and attendants do not like to disturb their fastidious ease with mention of the supernatural, at which they are sure to scoff. There seems, however, good reason for thinking that Herod had been absent altogether from the country for some of the time which is covered by the Ministry of our Lord. It is at least certain that now that the fame of our Lord reached him, the murder of St. John Baptist was already a thing of the past, and also that the reports of our Lord, which were brought to his ears, related chiefly to His miracles, rather than to His doctrine. It is only on account of these wonderful works that our Lord is mentioned to the Tetrarch, and St. Luke tells us that he desired very much to see our Lord, in consequence of these reports. Not that we can suppose that he was inclined to listen to anything that our Lord

might say, but that a wonderworker might have furnished him and his pleasure-seeking Court with a new sensation for their jaded appetites. We must remember that St. John worked no miracles himself, and thus the language of the Tetrarch is accounted for. He thought that, having risen from the dead, he might have greater powers from Heaven than before, and, whoever the new wonderworker might be, it would be a novelty at the Court to see Him and perhaps see Him work some miracles. It cannot surprise us that any friends of our Lord—some such appear to have had near access to the Tetrarch himself—should be alarmed at the diversion of his attention to Him, and think that, having put St. John to death once, he might easily be so much frightened as to attempt to repeat the crime. Such tyrants are not logical in the panics which occasionally seize them. If St. John could rise from the dead once, he might do so again. But Herod reasoned as the Chief Priests reasoned about Lazarus, whom they decided to put to death because our Lord had raised him to life, and many believed on our Lord in consequence.¹

Here the Evangelists might have stopped if they had chosen, for the incident of the murder of St. John did not belong strictly to the narratives of the Life of our Lord. They had passed it over at the time, for it was some time since it had taken place, and a simple reference to it was all that was required for the onward flow of the history on which they were engaged. But the martyrdom of the Precursor was not in truth an event which could be passed over in the history. In the first place, St. John was too important a person in himself. In the second place, his death had its importance as bringing about the more complete fusion, so to speak, of his disciples with those of our Lord. And,

¹ St. John xii. 10, 11.

moreover, the Gospel was to contain some kind of anticipation of that which was to be so marked a feature in the life of the Catholic Church, namely, the feature of the glory given to God, by those who were to lay down their lives for His sake. Thus, though the charge of our Lord to the Apostles is separated by St. Matthew, on account of the order of thought which he prefers to the order of time, from this incident of the martyrdom of St. John, it is clear that, when our Lord spoke the words on which we have lately been dwelling, about those who were to save their lives by losing them, about His own confessing, before His Father, those who would confess Him before men, and the like, the murder of His great Precursor was either just at hand or had already taken place. This consideration gives great force to the words in question. The martyrdom of the Baptist was not precisely on account of the confession of faith in our Lord, like the martyrdom of St. Stephen, and of the generality of martyrs. It was a death inflicted on him on account of the hatred of a wicked adulteress for him, because he had spoken the truth without flinching to the miserable partner of her guilt, and she was always afraid that, sometime or other, his words might be listened to. But God sets such store on the service of martyrdom, that He would not let the Blessed Baptist miss, so to say, the opportunity which the malice of Herodias was preparing for him. His work was done, most faithfully, and he might have been let go to his grave in peace. But there was something more glorious in the crown of martyrdom, which was within his reach, although not exactly in the same way with the generality of the martyrs of the Church. And thus it was ordained that he should lead the van in this respect also, and wear for ever in Heaven that crown and that special glory.

The words of Herod, which are quoted by the Evangelists, do not seem to have been spoken publicly, but in private to his own servants and officers, some of whom may have been in communication with the friends of our Lord. We find the name of Joanna, wife of Chuza, the steward or chamberlain of the Tetrarch, among those of the holy women who are mentioned as the companions of St. Mary Magdalene, when she first began to follow the Apostles and our Lord about, to minister to their temporal wants, and probably to be of use in the instruction of women who wished to see our Lord. Through this lady the words of the Tetrarch may have been repeated to our Lord, in order that He might have warning as to the possible danger of His apprehension by Herod. It was this admonition which seems to have determined our Lord's movements just at this time, and it appears to have coincided with the return to Him of the Apostles after their first mission. When it is said that our Lord retired into a desert place apart with the Apostles, as we shall see presently, it is clear that this retirement was made on account of the news, not that the holy Baptist had been put to death, which happened some time before, but that the Tetrarch had heard of the fame of our Lord and had said what implied that his eye was on this new worker of miracles. This was quite enough to alarm the friends of our Lord, and He Himself, in His perfect prudence, may have seen in the fact that the mind of the capricious and reckless tyrant had been occupied with Him, a reason for still greater circumspection in His movements, especially as He was already under the ban of the ecclesiastical authorities of the holy nation. It is clear that the fact of what passed in the Court of Herod was of some importance in the minds of the Evangelists, for this is the reason that they assign for the

retirement of our Lord, and it is on occasion of this that they mention historically the murder of the Baptist.

What had taken place was this, as it is related with great particularity by St. Mark, who here supplements largely the concise statement of St. Matthew. Herod himself 'had sent and apprehended John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, the wife of Philip his brother, because he had married her. For John said to Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Now Herodias laid snares for him, and was desirous to put him to death, and could not, for Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man, and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things, and he heard him willingly. And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birthday, and for the princes, and tribunes, and chief men of Galilee. And when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in and had danced, and pleased Herod and them that were at table with him, the King said to the damsel, Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore to her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask I will give thee, though it be the half of my kingdom. Who when she was gone out, said to her mother, What shall I ask? But she said, The head of John the Baptist. And when she was come in immediately with haste to the King, she asked, saying, I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist. And the King was struck sad, yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her. But sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish, and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother. And his

disciples came and took the body, and laid it in a tomb, and came and told Jesus.'

It is not said at what time this took place, nor when it was that the disciples of St. John came to our Lord with the intelligence of the murder of their master. But their doing this shows that they understood the close connection between our Lord and St. John, and is inconsistent with any idea of opposition either between the two masters or their respective followers. It may have been that this took place on the last occasion when we had to make mention of the disciples of the Blessed Precursor, or perhaps somewhat later, before the charge to the Apostles had been given. The whole story is a picture of the state of things in the more outlying portions of the Roman Empire, where the petty sovereigns who had made themselves friends with the great rulers of the world at Rome, the Imperial family, or their adherents and favourites, imitated the ways of their masters on the throne of the Cæsars, only, as all such imitators are wont to do, with circumstances of additional and extraordinary indifference to crime of every kind when it suited their purpose or their lusts to indulge in it. The Roman Empire was now fast on its way to the bloody tyranny of Nero. Even before his time it had become the fashion, it may almost be said, to take away life recklessly, without the allegation of any charge or the formality of any trial. These petty princes, who could not stir hand or foot in any matter of political importance without the nod of their patrons, were yet at liberty to murder any one whom they chose in the exercise of their prerogative. Then, again, the manners of those courts were exceedingly profligate, though in this perhaps not far exceeding the nameless debaucheries of the Emperors themselves. The dancers at such banquets as that given by Herod, would usually be professional

women of no character or position, and the dances which they danced, as well as their costumes and gestures, would be licentious in the very extreme. In this case it was a princess, a girl just budding into womanhood, but already probably far advanced in the career of corruption, who cast aside her nobility of birth, as well as all maidenly decency, to dance one of those shameless and abominable dances which are still practised in the East, exposing herself in the most wanton manner amidst all those pampered voluptuaries, who drank in with greedy eyes every single motion and gesture calculated, of set purpose, to arouse to mad excitement their jaded and worn out appetites. She was his niece, the child of his adulterous paramour and of her lawful husband, his own brother, and for very shame Herod must have been anxious to save her from further scrutiny as she stood waiting for her reward. It was over in a moment. There was a certain air of greatness about the oath to give her whatever she might ask, even to the half of his kingdom, which at any time might have been taken away from him by a word at Rome, and he might look round on his excited guests and listen to their applause and flattery at his magnificence. Then she darted out, and was in a moment with her mother, whose malice was not lulled to sleep by the fumes of the banquet, the occasion of the feast, or by the success of her child, already old in profligacy. And so in another moment she was back again, asking for the head of the Prophet in a dish.

Herod is not described to us as a bloodthirsty man. Indeed, we are told that he had much respect for St. John, and heard him gladly, so that Herodias was afraid to compass his murder on her own authority. He even took the advice of the Saint on matters not affecting his own bad passions. But he had tampered

long with his conscience, which had been aroused in some measure by the strong remonstrances of St. John. He was in a state of excitement, perhaps more than half drunk, and his licentiousness had just been stimulated by the lascivious display of the dancer, in which modesty had been entirely sacrificed. But it is apparently by a special Providence that, into this wicked scene of lustfulness and cruelty should come another element almost as powerful for evil, even in our own time, as those others. He had made a promise and sworn an oath, without knowing to what he was binding himself when he did it. He had put his conscience, as well as his royal power, into the hands of the dancing girl, and now she was his mistress, and he could not refuse her any request, without losing his honour in the estimation of the miserable band of debauchees who had witnessed the dancing and heard the promise. Thus an entirely new element was introduced into the incident. Voluptuousness and cruelty, revenge and shamelessness, are common enough, and so unfortunately is the oath or the promise made in the dark, whereby men pledge themselves to do whatever they are asked, not only to the half of an earthly kingdom, but to the extent of murder, treason, sacrilege, and all other crimes of the blackest hue. It seems as if the greatest crime committed in the history of the times of our Lord, except His own murder, was to have this special characteristic, for the warning of Christians in all ages of the Church against the sin of Herod—not the sin of murder, of adultery, for against those sins there were warnings enough before, but for the especial purpose of placing the brand of the special condemnation of God on the secret oath, and the promise to do some unknown thing, whatever it may be, that the leaders of some society, apparently harmless, may decide on.

This poor girl might have asked a thousand things that would have been of service to her, that might have added fresh pleasures to her life, or secured her a happy home and an abundant fortune. She might have asked for the release of the captives, or for the distribution of largesses among the poor, or she might have asked for the remission of some tax which ground down the poor labourers, for something for the honour of God, or the direct benefit of her own soul or of his. Who would have thought that she would fix her choice on an act of bloodshed, which could do her no good, nor add to her pleasures, increase her power, or her honour with the world, or in any way contribute to her happiness? But it seems to have been providentially ordered that there should be in the Gospel history this incident, of the miserable triumph of two evil principles, which are certainly not less rife in modern society than of old—the influence of lasciviousness in dress and in dancing, and the terrible mischief that comes from oaths or promises of the kind made by Herod. If it is not common in modern life for state prisoners to be sent to execution at the request of dancing girls, we are still familiar enough with the slaughter of souls and the ruin of modesty, which are connected by no indirect ties with the fashions of dress, especially for the dance or the theatre, fashions still imposed even on Christian ladies, who do not wish to be children of vice, or the encouragers or occasions of sin in those who gaze on them. And if the rash oath of Herod is not now repeated in terms by the princes and rulers of the modern world, it is yet fatally true that the Church for more than a century and a half has been waging unceasing war against the principle of the secret societies, which impose, on the souls of those who enlist themselves in them, the same miserable and false obligation of doing

whatever they are told by leaders who are in truth plotters alike against religion and against the stability and peace of the social order. Herod would not refuse the request of the daughter of Herodias, for the sake of his oath and for the sake of the credit he might risk with those who sat at meat with him. The oath which he had no right to make, he had no right to keep, and if he sinned in keeping it, he sinned equally in making it. The human respect, again, of which he was in fear, was a motive which could not avail to justify a crime. Thus in this incident of nearly nineteen centuries old, we have the condemnation of two of the dominant causes of the ruin of souls in the times in which we live, while at the same time we see in it the perpetually recurring connection between sensuality and cruelty, luxury and sacrilege.

At the time of which we are writing, the faith of the Apostles was being gradually trained higher and higher, by the Providential guidance of the Father, and it must have been a new lesson to them, when the tidings reached them of the death of the Blessed Baptist. They were gradually learning, more and more distinctly, the truth as to the Divine Person of our Lord. And, as this truth grew in their minds, they must have recognized, more and more, the marvellous characteristic of the dispensations of God, by which, being Who He was, He allowed so much power to His enemies, and made so little effort to repel their measures of hostility by any exertion of His unquestionable power. The same thought may have crossed the minds of some of them, when He allowed St. John to be arrested by Herod, for there must have been among them even then some at least who must have felt sure that He could at a moment have delivered the Baptist, if He had so willed it. And now it flashed across them that He might have

saved him from death if such had been the design of His Providence. St. John was His most valued friend. His position, in the Kingdom of the Incarnation, had lately been defined by our Lord Himself, when He had to speak of him, after the solemn embassy which had been sent by him. 'Among those born of women, no one had arisen who was greater than John the Baptist.' And yet his life had been taken in the most ignominious manner, he had been slain without trial, without charge, simply to please a dancer and her mother. In this lesson must have been contained to thoughtful minds a great revelation of the character of the Gospel Kingdom. The lot that had fallen to St. John could not be an ordinary lot. It must be a crown of no ordinary splendour, according to the measures of that Kingdom in which he held so high a place. They had heard the Master of the house called Beelzebub, and He had told them that those of the household must not expect better treatment than Himself. And now they found that He had, as it were, crowned His own dearest friend and most exalted servant, in this way, ignominious and humiliating in the extreme in the eyes of the world, both to the Master and to the servant. It may have already come home to them that they themselves might have the same lot, and the same crown, and that this was in truth the most glorious way in which a servant of the Incarnate God could end his earthly service for his Lord.

The language of the Evangelists in relating the burial of the Precursor after his shameful execution, implies what is a constant characteristic of such incidents, namely, that no opposition was offered by the guards of Herod to the free access of the disciples to the place of his murder. It is often the case that a kind of awe falls on the persons who have had a part in such crimes,

and they do not carry their enmity to their victims further than is strictly necessary for their immediate purpose. The disciples of the Baptist were allowed to take away his body, just as afterwards the Jews were not able to prevent the honourable burial of our Lord Himself. And the words of St. Mark, as has often been remarked, seem to signify that the place of the burial of St. John was not unknown when the Evangelist wrote. For he says that the body was placed in 'the tomb,' not in 'a tomb,' and it is thus extremely likely that the remains of this first of the martyrs of the Gospel, after the Holy Innocents, were venerated and honoured from the earliest period of the Church.

The murder of the great Precursor closes for us the earthly career of one more of the three great souls who are placed most closely of all to our Lord Himself. St. Joseph is removed from our sight in the latter stage of the Hidden Life at Nazareth, and the Blessed Virgin Mother is left, to stand at the foot of the Cross on Calvary, and to be for many years the nursing Mother of the Church, as she had been the nursing Mother of our Lord. The great Baptist was as yet full of life and vigour, and he was but six months older than our Lord Himself, for Whom, no doubt, he would have longed to labour, and after many years of service to lay down his life. It was not so ordained in the counsels of God. The work and the position of the Baptist were both unique, of a kind of their own, and he was not to take any part in the further propagation of the truths to which he had been so glorious a witness. His work was done, and the time had come for it to be crowned, nor could it be crowned, in the counsels of God, by a nobler or more meritorious death. The time had not yet come for the Christian martyrdoms, and yet the Baptist was to be a martyr and venerated as such in all ages of the

Church. He was to shed his blood for the law of God, as had been the case with many of the saints of old, of whom St. Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Hebrews.² His life was sought and sacrificed because he had borne so faithful and so bold a witness to the law of marriage and of chastity. Whether or not, as some think, he had had some revelation of his approaching end and of its immediate cause, we may be sure that St. John welcomed its announcement with that intense joy of heart which was one of the characteristics, as it seems, of his sanctity.

From the moment when the voice of Mary, sounding in the ears of his mother Elisabeth, roused him up to consciousness, to the use of his reason, to the knowledge of the Divine mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption, when his soul was filled with grace, delivered from the stain of original sin, and enriched with the gifts of prophecy and the like, so that it might at once begin the interior service of communing with God which was to be the occupation of his life, St. John's life had been ever a succession of great spiritual joys. Every now and then the joy of his heart speaks out in words, and reveals to us its own interior depth. He who rejoiced so much at the simple presence of the Redeemer, in the womb of Mary, how must he have rejoiced when the time came for him to leave his beloved solitude in the desert, and to go forth at last on his mission to prepare the people for the reception of Jesus Christ! How he must have rejoiced to see the multitudes flocking to the scene of his preaching, and confessing their sins, to be able to baptize them with the baptism of penance, to instruct them in the observance of the duties of their state of life, and, above all, to speak to them of the coming Messias, the latchet of Whose shoes he was not worthy to loose. Every opportunity that was given him of

² Heb. xi.

witnessing to Him Who was to come after him, was an occasion of immense joy. And then, after a few months, the time came when our Lord Himself came to him and demanded Baptism, and after that short contest of humility, he had the blessing of baptizing the Incarnate Son of God, of witnessing the manifestation of the Three Divine Persons which ensued, of hearing the words of the Father from Heaven, that this was His beloved Son in Whom He was well pleased.

It is not easy to think that the significance of this mystery was lost on St. John, and that he did not receive the knowledge that, at that time, the element of water was consecrated by the touch of our Lord for the purposes of Christian Baptism, the sacrament by means of which so many millions of souls were to be regenerated and made heirs of Heaven. And a little later in the history, we find him able to point out our Lord to many of his own disciples as the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sin of the world. It seems from this that the Blessed Baptist had at that time a clear intelligence of the manner in which it was decreed that the redemption of the world should be wrought by the Sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross. And if this was so, there can have been hardly any limit to the rejoicing of his heart over the future reconciliation between God and man. To a heart so wonderfully disinterested as his, a heart so singly and entirely devoted, from the first moment at which it began to beat, to the love of our Lord, it is not easy to imagine a greater joy than that which must have penetrated St. John when he had the happiness of sending to our Lord his own most beloved disciples, with the consciousness that he had done his part faithfully, and had nothing more now to do than rejoice over the increasing influence of Him Whom he was sent to announce, and to point out when He came.

These are the purest joys of the highest saints, those who have in their hearts no alloy of the slightest self-love, and are therefore capable of joy that is more like that of Heaven than that of earth.

There is nowhere in the Gospel narrative so much of a disclosure of intimate feelings on the part of St. John, as in the dialogue between this great Saint and his own disciples, which is related by the Evangelist of the same name in his third chapter. The occasion is that of the kind of complaint made by the disciples of the Baptist to their master, about the increasing popularity of the Baptism preached by our Lord. St. John replies to them that he had always told them that he was not himself the Christ, but was sent before Him. 'He that hath the bride is the bridegroom, but the friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled.' This, then, was another stage in the life of St. John, a stage full of joy, because in it he witnessed the accomplishment at once of the prophecies and of the darling desire of his own heart, which was that our Lord might be known and glorified. And those who have hearts like his are all the more delighted when the glorification of the other, to whom they are so devoted, takes place at something which looks like cost to themselves. St. John rejoiced, not only at the increase, as he calls it, of our Lord, but at his own decrease in consequence, though decrease it was not in truth, for it raised him higher and higher in the favour of God, it was a special exercise of his love for our Lord. We may see the same delicate and refined joy in his action after his own imprisonment, when, on hearing of the miracles of our Lord, he sent his disciples on the solemn embassy of which mention is made by the Evangelists, to ask Him if He was He

that was to come. It was to give our Lord the desired opportunity of speaking for Himself to those to whom the Baptist had often before spoken, and to reserve, so to say, for Him the final conquest of whatever there was of lingering hesitation on the part of those who were sent. It is always a most tender satisfaction to such a heart as his, to make those who are so much loved know one the other, and give to those to whose excellence they are to bear witness the occasion of being also their own witnesses. We see by the subsequent conduct of the disciples of St. John, how perfectly their master had done his work in their hearts, though that work was of necessity one of self-sacrifice and annihilation. This is the characteristic and most exquisite sanctity of the Baptist, and his practice of it, in the perfection in which he did practise it, makes it very easy indeed to understand the supreme height of his glory in the Kingdom of God.

To such a soul there could but be one more joy reserved, that of shedding his blood for our Lord, and, as has been said, this was granted to him by the arrangement of Providence, by which his death was brought about in the manner which we know. It was a death ignominious in the eyes of the world in the highest degree, and for this very reason, on account of its resemblance to our Lord's own death on the Cross, an additional glory to the Blessed Baptist. There was no publicity about it, no display of heroism in the sufferer, no opportunity for the sympathy of the people, no dignity of circumstance, no time of preparation or expectation. It was over in a moment. The executioner came in, cut off his head, and left his body on the ground uncared for, for it was his business to secure the head to be given to the girl in a dish. Thus a life of self-effacement was ended in a moment by a death

of ignominy, with no more honour or decent respect about it than if the Prophet had been some insignificant wild beast or vermin. It was an end such as one might well have desired who wished to be utterly unknown and despised to the very last.

Some of the Fathers consider that here also was an occasion of special joy to that most loving heart, because his death was, in truth, a kind of mission to him to a new world, where he might make known to expectant millions the advent and near approach of Him Whom he so tenderly loved. He was sent to the mighty world of the expectant spirits of those who were in the peace of God, those who had never entered Purgatory, or who had passed from Purgatory to the calm abode which is called by the Church the Limbus of the Fathers. The Prophets and Patriarchs were there, and all the chief Saints of the Old Testament, those whose life-long prayer had been for the coming of the promised Salvation, those who had prefigured or foretold or longed for our Lord in their several generations. They must have known that the deliverance of the world was nigh at hand, and they had not long before this received among their number the foster-father himself of our Lord. But the advent of the Baptist was probably a special joy to them, for he was the official Precursor, the Messenger specially sent before the face of the Redeemer. He belonged to the New Testament as well as to the Old, he summed up the preaching of the Prophets and was at the same time the first preacher of the Gospel. His coming was a presage of that of our Lord Himself. He was almost a part of our Lord, and so that thrill of joy which ran through that peaceful realm of expectation and desire on his arrival, was an echo of the joy of his own most perfect heart, at finding so many millions of souls to whom he could be the

Messenger of the best tidings that Heaven or earth could send below, the tidings of the near approach of the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

Feeding the Five Thousand.

St. Matt. xiv. 13—21 ; St. Mark vi. 30—34 ; St. Luke ix. 10—17 ;
St. John vi. 1—13 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 72.

THE Evangelists tell us that, on the reception by our Lord of the intelligence of the disposition of the crafty and unscrupulous Tetrarch towards Him, He retired by means of a boat into a desert place apart. At the same time they place the return to our Lord of the Apostles, who had been scattered in pairs over the country for the purpose of their first missionary tour. It is not impossible that our Lord may have kept them always in close correspondence with Himself, even while absent from His side, and that thus it may have been easy for them to be summoned in a few days, or less, to the spot at which He was, probably near one end of the Lake. They would naturally be full of their mission, especially if, as seems likely from something afterwards mentioned concerning this tour, they had had great success and had been well received and cared for by the people among whom they went. It is not even certain that they had heard of the words of Herod to his servants, which contained so much to alarm the friends of our Lord. The first thing, therefore, would be for them to give a report of their proceedings and of the issue of their mission in various places. This

was the foundation of an invariable rule in the Church. After this our Lord invited them to take some rest, not so much perhaps for their bodies as for their souls. For active missionary work is always liable to steal away something from recollection and peace of mind, and it was to be an example which was to be handed on from the Life of our Lord Himself, that all those employed on such labours for souls should be careful to refresh their own spirits by short intervals of rest, prayer, and solitude.

‘Which when Jesus had heard, He retired from thence in a boat to a desert place apart. And the Apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to Him all things that they had done and taught. And He said to them, Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little. For there were many coming and going, and they had not so much as time to eat. And going up into a ship they went into a desert place apart.’ St. Luke says the place belonged to, or was near, Bethsaida, and St. John says that to reach it our Lord went over the Sea of Galilee. The name Bethsaida applies to more than one place, and thus the spot is not fixed for us with any certainty, but it is of little moment thus to fix the places mentioned in the Gospels. Thus our Lord provided at once for three great objects which He had, as we may think, in His Heart at this time. One of these was to keep Himself still out of the sight of the world, and especially of His enemies, to the number of whom must now be added the Tetrarch Herod. Another object was to draw the Apostles away from the active life of too much pressure on their time, which was the inevitable result of their success and industry in their preaching. And a third was to provide for the presence of a large multitude in a lonely place, where there could be no interruption, for the purpose of feeding them with the

few loaves which He intended to multiply for their sustenance, and thus to lay the foundation by this new kind of miracle, and by the discourse on the subject which was to follow, for the introduction of the doctrine relating to the marvellous invention of His love, of which no one but Himself had yet conceived the thought, in the Blessed Sacrament and Holy Communion.

All was done with the utmost simplicity and quiet. It was perfectly natural that He should go into a desert place after the intelligence which He had received. It was equally natural that He should urge on the Apostles the necessity of retirement for them, and also that the people about Capharnaum, who had probably not seen Him for several months or weeks, should desire to get to Him as soon as they found out where He was to be reached. Thus, in the simplest way, the occasion and the actors, so to say, in this great miracle, were furnished, the spot was chosen, and the crowds were ready, without any provision for themselves, and all had come about as it were by accident. So it was all through the Public Life of our Lord. He arranged the circumstances which led, as it were spontaneously, to His greatest miracles and teachings, and all seemed to come about of itself. There would have been no occasion for the miracle, if He had been teaching the multitude on the seashore near Capharnaum. But He would not have retired into the desert merely for the purpose of inducing them to follow Him. So He took the occasion of the need of the Apostles for rest and solitude, and in that way drew after Him the crowds whose presence was necessary for the significant miracle He was about to work, a miracle which contained in itself the prophecy and the promise of a boon far more marvellous, far more lasting, far more beneficial, than that simple multiplication of the loaves in which it consisted.

‘And the multitudes having heard of it followed Him on foot, out of the cities. And they saw them going away, and many knew, and they ran following thither on foot from all the cities, and were there before them. And a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.’ All this points to some well-known and not distant spot. The position on the mountain enabled them to see from a distance the people who were coming to them from all parts around. A beautiful sight for the Sacred Heart of our Lord! for these multitudes represented to Him the far more countless crowds who were to be fed by Him in the Church in all ages, not on loaves and fishes, or any food that would support the body only for a short time, but on the saving banquet of His own Precious Body and Blood, the food of the elect, the partaking of which was to be the source to them of eternal life both of the body and of the soul.

The order of the incidents is not very difficult to discern, although not all four Evangelists mention them all. For this is the one miracle of our Lord’s Ministry which is related by all the four. If we are to take quite literally the words of St. John, it seems better to suppose that at the very beginning of the incident we must place some words of our Lord which have distinct reference to the miracle which He was about to work, although some hours may have intervened between these words and the actual feeding of the multitudes. For St. John tells us that our Lord spoke these words when He saw the great multitudes coming to Him, which must have been comparatively early in the day. For our Lord certainly had the whole of this great action of His present to His Heart from the first. He would at once think even of their temporal and bodily needs, before

the time had come for any pressing urgency in supplying them, and much more would He have present the spiritual needs of their souls and His own most gracious invention of love for their remedy. 'When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seeth that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that all these may eat? And this He said to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.' Philip may have had some charge in the holy community, such as that of providing the bread and other food for the company, and so he might be expected to know what would be sufficient. But our Lord's question was like that of Isaac to his father about the lamb for the sacrifice, on Mount Moriah, to which Abraham answers in the prophetic words: 'The Lord will provide.'¹ After this it seems that nothing more was said about the purchase of bread or other food, until the time came when the multitude ought to be dismissed to their homes.

'And He coming forth saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them and healed their sick.' 'He had compassion on them,' adds St. Mark, 'because they were as sheep having no shepherd, and He began to teach them many things. He received them, and spoke to them of the Kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.' The coming forth here spoken of implies that our Lord, after seeing them from the mountain, came down to meet them. It seems, then, that the people had brought with them many of their sick, which is a sign at once of their faith and also of the fact that our Lord had not been among them for some time. The Evangelists taken together give us a

¹ Gen. xxii. 8.

complete account of what our Lord did on this occasion. First, He had compassion on them. He took pity on them, though He had not invited them to come, and was alone with His Apostles for another purpose than that either of teaching them or healing them. And St. Mark, the mouthpiece of the loving shepherd of souls, St. Peter, adds the reason of the special compassion of our Lord, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. It was the same loving compassion, then, that had sent out the Apostles originally to preach to them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. In the next place, He taught them many things concerning the Kingdom of God, and in the third place, He joined corporal mercy to spiritual mercy, by healing those who had need. And so the day wore on, in the early spring time, and at that season of the year when the days and nights are of about equal length, and the shades of evening began to gather before the holy and gracious work of the instruction was completed.

This was the time to which our Lord had looked forward, while the multitude were coming to Him, and while He was teaching and healing them. ‘When it was evening,’ says St. Matthew, ‘When the day was now far spent,’ says St. Mark, ‘The day began to decline,’ says St. Luke. The disciples were alarmed lest the instruction should be continued too long, for the people hung upon his lips and His sweet method of teaching them made them forget everything, except that He Who taught them was also healing all that had need among them. Before the multitudes thought for themselves, and perhaps even after considerable delay, out of respect to our Lord in the fervour of His teaching, as they would not be willing to interrupt Him until it was quite necessary, ‘the disciples came to Him saying, This is a desert place, and the hour is now past, send away

the multitudes, that going into the towns they may buy themselves victuals, that going into the next villages and towns they may buy themselves bread, they may lodge and get meat, for we are here in a desert place.' The thoughtfulness of the Apostles extended to every way in which the needs of the people might be relieved, except that by means of which God had determined to relieve them. And then our Lord, in His simple, calm, and majestic way, told them that there was no need. 'But Jesus said to them, They have no need, give you them to eat! And they said to Him, Let us go and buy bread for two hundred pence, and we will give them to eat. And He said to them, How many loaves have you? Go and see. And when they knew they said, Five, and two fishes. We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless perhaps we should go and buy victuals for all this multitude. There is a boy here, said St. Andrew to Him, that hath five loaves and two fishes, but what are they among so many? He said, Bring them hither to Me.' What were they among so many? More than enough, in the hands of Jesus Christ. Nay, better than if they had been more.

It must now have been manifest to the Apostles, that our Lord was about to work some great miracle. Nor could the multitude themselves have been without some impression of what was coming. For it is not easy to control so large a number as five thousand men at a word, and yet there seems to have been no resistance or hesitation as to their obedience. 'Now there were about five thousand men. And He commanded that they should all sit down in companies on the green grass.' It was early in the year, and the grass had not yet been withered or dried up by the scorching sun, for we are told by St. John that this miracle was wrought about the time of the Pasch, a little probably before the time for

the annual pilgrimage of the Galileans to Jerusalem. ‘And He said to His disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company; and they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and fifties.’ In this way provision was made for the perfect order of the multitude, and for the easy and rapid distribution of the bread. For the twelve Apostles could thus take each eight or nine fifties, and the distribution would have been finished in a comparatively short time. Moreover, this arrangement gave occasion for a greater air of solemnity, such as befitted a banquet which was the fruit of the extraordinary beneficence of God. It made the miracle more evident to all, and as the evidence of the miracle grew more and more clear and conspicuous, it prompted and made easy the religious and devout reception of this heavenly food from the hands of the Apostles, as if it were a sort of anticipation of the great communions of so many thousands, which are not uncommon in churches after a great mission, or on the occasion of some great festival.

All the motions and actions of our Lord in this great miracle are carefully noted and recorded by the Evangelists, and the scene must have impressed itself in a singular manner on the minds of the Apostles. ‘And taking the five loaves and the two fishes, looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke the loaves, and gave to His disciples to set before them, and the two fishes He divided among them all. In like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would. And they did all eat and were filled. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up, therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves and of the fishes, which remained over and above to them that had eaten.’

It cannot be doubted that every detail of the cir-

cumstances of this wonderful act of love had been arranged in the Providence of God, so as to have some deep spiritual meaning, and the miracle and all its details is itself a figure, a promise, and a prophecy. The needs of the people were, after all, not very great, for they were not far from the neighbouring villages, as the Apostles suggested, and they spoke as if they themselves might have bought bread enough for them, at least so as to give to each a little, enough to stay hunger, though not enough to satisfy fully. Thus the necessity for a miracle was not very great in itself, and this was also the case with the other great sacramental miracle of the change of the water into wine at the marriage-feast. Again, the miracle was not asked for, except by the needs of the people, such as they were, for no one seems to have conceived the thought that our Lord would provide in this magnificent way for a necessity not very great. In this respect there is a contrast between this and the miracle of the wedding-feast. For in that case our Blessed Lady was present, and her heart was far more able to fathom the depths of love and beneficence in our Lord than the hearts of the Apostles. She did not hesitate to ask, and she understood the silent consent conveyed in our Lord's answer to her, and so persevered in her hope that her prayer would not be denied. If she had been present at this scene on the mountain-side, she would have been content to say, 'They have no food !'

It seems as if our Lord had had the intention from the first to work this miracle, as may be gathered from His words to St. Philip at the beginning of the incident, which St. John tells us were spoken when the multitude first drew near to our Lord. So He must have gone on teaching them till it was late in the afternoon, quite conscious all the time of the difficulty that would have

to be met. Indeed, it must be thought that He created the difficulty rather than met it when it arose. For it was in consequence of the length of the discourse in which He taught them, that the day was so far advanced when the time came for them to be sent away. And yet He allowed the difficulty to arise naturally, and when the disciples come to Him in their troubles, He calmly tells them, 'you are to give them to eat.' It cannot be but that the hearts of the multitude were prepared by this long and fervent discourse for the great boon which they were to receive, and which they deserved, in a certain sense, by their fervour in coming so far to seek our Lord, by their confidence in Him, their abandonment of all care for their temporal food in listening to Him, and the devotion that made them linger on, not thinking of themselves while others had to think for them. If they had thought of it they might have said that it was worth fasting, and going home hungry and weary, to listen to His gracious words.

Then again, in taking the few loaves and fishes, as the matter on which to work this great miracle, our Lord acted in the way which is remarkable in the whole system of the Church, in which God takes some simple elements, and makes them the material part of great sacraments, when it would in truth cost Him no more to create whatever He wants, or to convey His blessings in spiritual gifts alone. In all this we see the principle of the Incarnation, and of the kingdom founded thereupon. Our Lord does not directly exercise His creative power, He takes what He finds, and endows it with new and wonderful fertility. Another feature, found in this miracle, and apparently for the first time in the series of such works, is the ministerial work of the Apostles. They had just returned from the labours of their first missionary flight, so to speak, away from our Lord, and

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now they are used as His instruments in this significant work of the feeding of the thousands assembled on this mountain-side. It seems most probable that the bread grew in their hands as the oil in the widow's cruise, and thus they might even seem to the people to have some part in the working of the wonder. In any case, they held a distinct and honourable position, and this becomes the more significant, when we consider the sacramental meaning of the miracle. Finally, there is significance also in the command of our Lord that the miraculous bread should not be wasted, but carefully preserved. The command gives an air of solemnity and devotion to the whole scene, it becomes like a religious service, and thus closes the whole incident in a way which bespeaks its importance and sacredness. The people went away as from a holy rite or ceremony, and the Apostles meanwhile were busy in collecting the sacred fragments.

The immense tenderness and charity of our Lord would be quite enough to account for all the beautiful incidents and characteristics of the miracle. But we know that He must have had more in His Heart than the simple action of the feeding so large a multitude with the food of the body, after having refreshed and healed their souls with the Word of God. Just so it is not too much to think of His compassion, that He would have changed the water into wine at the prayer of His Mother at the marriage of Cana. For there is no limit to His power, and the poverty and possible shame of the entertainers would have had a claim on Him, even if there had not been the powerful intercession of His Mother to aid it. But yet we do not ordinarily think that our Lord worked that beginning of signs without a distinct purpose in His Heart, to prepare the minds of the Apostles for future mysteries, as well as to confirm their faith in Him. He chose to begin His signs at the appeal of

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His Mother, not, we may suppose, without a design of fixing for ever her place in the administration of the graces of His Kingdom. He chose to supply the deficiency of wine at the banquet in that particular way of the changing into it of the water. This choice was made for a Divine reason, on which the perpetual miracle of the Blessed Sacrament throws a flood of light. So on the present occasion it is not well to consider that our Lord's designs, in the details of the miracle as in the miracle itself, were limited to the simple relief of that amount of want and inconvenience which might have pressed on the crowds who had come from their homes to listen to Him, and whom He had detained so late by the charm of His teaching.

This seems to be conveyed to us by the words of St. John, at the beginning of his account of the miracle, 'He Himself knew what He would do.' It would take us long to draw out all that these words contain of mysterious signification. At first sight they seem to mean that He knew how He was to supply those wants of the people, which Philip thought could not be met, except by the buying of a very large amount of bread for them to eat. He knew that He was about to supply these wants in a different way. He knew that the five loaves and the two fishes that were in the basket of the youth of whom St. Andrew spoke later on would be more than enough for His purpose. But He knew more than that. He knew that by this great miracle He was to prepare the minds and hearts of men for a far more abundant and life-giving banquet, even the feast of His own Precious Body and Blood, of which this multiplication of the loaves was the type and forecast. For it was the normal state and condition of our Lord in His Public Life to have immense treasures of designs and plans and inventions of love and wisdom, for the benefit of man-

kind, in His Heart, of which those about Him were incapable of forming even an idea. He was full of compassion and tenderness and patience, and He had need of all His patience in bearing with the very narrow minds and dull apprehensions of those who were to be the recipients and even the ministers of His bounty. And He had but a short time to do all His work, of which no part was more difficult than that of gradually raising the minds and hearts of men to an intelligence and appreciation of what He was about, the counsels of His love, the devices of His wisdom and condescension. Men's notions of God are always low and dull, feeble and small. This comes much more into full light when He is about to introduce new institutions and systems into the world, all of which are necessarily stamped with the character of His own exceeding greatness and magnificence. And all this was to be done in a few months. St. John tells us that this miracle happened about the time of the feast of the Pasch. Thus before another year had fully come round, He would be on the very eve of His Sacred Passion. So He was, as we say, obliged to catch His opportunities and make the most of His occasions, as they presented themselves in the Providence of His Father, in order to pour into human minds and hearts around Him, if not all the truths and all the benefits He had ready, at least a certain amount of knowledge and intelligence, which would help men, when the time came for the full manifestation of His counsels, to receive them with less difficulty.

This then was another thing that our Lord knew He would do. And we see traces of this in the discourse which follows immediately after the narrative of this miracle in the Gospel of St. John, for the sake of which, it is probable, in accordance with the usual method of this Evangelist, the miracle itself is mentioned by him.

For that discourse is the one remaining discourse of our Lord that we possess, in which the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament is contained. We shall comment on this discourse presently, but for the moment it is enough to refer to it in general. It shows beyond a doubt that our Lord must have had the Blessed Sacrament in His thoughts in connection with this miracle, and that, indeed, He forced the mention of it, as far as it is contained in what He there says about the feeding on His Body and Blood, on the attention of His hearers, even at considerable risk of startling them, and alienating many. Moreover He did not as yet fully explain how it was that men were to feed on that Body and that Blood, except so far as that teaching had been conveyed in a figure by the miracle of the loaves. There is something wanting to the full doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament in the discourse. This was afterwards supplied at the Last Supper, when He consecrated the Bread and the Wine and told the Apostles they were His Body and His Blood. With that text added, we read the discourse in a new light, and we see its connection with the miracle, which those who heard Him speak on that occasion could not have discerned. This then is another of the things which He knew He would do. He would not only work the miracle for the relief of the pressing wants of the hungry multitude, but He would take occasion from it to put forward a most startling and wonderful and difficult doctrine, concerning the Blessed Eucharist, the full meaning of which must wait until a later time to be divulged.

Further still, our Lord not only knew what He was to do with regard to the doctrine founded on this miracle, and the great boon which was foreshadowed and prefigured by it, but He also knew that He would, many years later, commission one of those beloved disciples

who were His instruments and ministers in the feeding of the people with the multiplied bread and fishes, to put on record for the benefit of the Church, in all ages, that same discourse in the Synagogue of Capharnaum, of which we have just now been speaking. Thus He was to provide for the Church, not only the Blessed Sacrament, but the doctrine also concerning the Blessed Sacrament, with all its consequences and manifold parts, in one of the inspired Gospels. Now this is a further boon, and a boon distinct from that of the Blessed Sacrament itself. And on this doctrine, thus imparted authoritatively to the Church, was to be founded an immense fabric of Christian dogma and theology, a treasure which would feed the minds of sages among men, and of the holy angels throughout all eternity. Putting together the doctrine and the miracle, and the subsequent institution of the Holy Eucharist, we have the whole truth concerning the Sacrament, the Christian priesthood, the Adorable Sacrifice, and all their issues in time and in eternity, all the familiar intercourse He was to have with His chosen souls in Holy Communion, and all the benefits to soul and body conveyed thereby. And His most loving Heart would have present to it, then and there, not only all He Himself was to do, but all that His saints would do for Him, in the power and might communicated to them by Him, all their returns of love and service, all the fruits to His glory which were to come from their devotion to His Sacramental Life. He could follow His own boon into the hearts into which it was to be received, and see all that it would produce, and even all that it might produce, and was intended by Him to produce. And alas! this thought suggests another, that this prevision of our Lord might have two sides, the side of the gratitude and correspondence of men to His grace, and the side

of their unfaithfulness and ingratitude, of all the outrages to His honour and His love which would be occasioned by the infinite condescension which was to be carried out in the history of the Blessed Sacrament among men. All this infinite amount of sacrilege and outrage He was to submit to with the utmost patience, for the sake of the return He would have in other souls. And if Heaven was to be full for ever of the glories and fruits of this new counsel of love, so also the place of eternal torment was to have its most miserable trophies in the indelible disgrace and ineffable misery of those who have violated His most tender gifts in Holy Communion, wearing on their brows the character of the Priesthood after the order of Melchisedec.

CHAPTER VIII.

Our Lord Walking on the Waters.

St. Matt. xiv. 22—36; St. Mark vi. 45—56; St. John vi. 19, 20;
Vita Vitæ Nostræ, § 73.

IT was probably not without a Divine purpose that our Lord delayed the working of the miracle of the five loaves until the evening of the day on which He had been occupied in teaching the multitudes. For the short twilight would soon be on them, and they would have no time to combine among themselves as to any designs they might form, in consequence of the intense enthusiasm which so great a miracle would certainly occasion. Their first thought would of necessity be, either to hasten home or to provide means for passing the night on or near the spot where the miracle had been wrought. The Evangelists tell us that our Lord took His measures rapidly after the feeding of the multitude. In the first place He obliged, we are told, His Apostles to enter the boat and set out for the opposite shore in the sight of the people, before He dismissed the latter. ‘He immediately obliged His disciples to go up into the ship, that they might go before Him over the water to Bethsaida, whilst He dismissed the people. And when He had dismissed them, He went up into the mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening He was there alone.’ This is what we are told by St. Matthew and St. Mark. St. John adds what supplies us with one reason at least, for this conduct on the part of our Lord. He tells us

that the miracle produced an immense effect on the minds of the people, and that it might very well have led to a sedition, which would have brought down on them the armed soldiery of the tyrant Herod, from whose observation our Lord was at this time withdrawing Himself. ‘Now these men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said, This is of a truth the Prophet that is to come into the world.’ That is, the Prophet like to himself, whom Moses had promised them. He had worked a wonder like that continual wonder in the days of Moses, the feeding of the people by the means of the manna from Heaven, and the poor people who had profited by that miracle were ready at once to hail Him as the promised Prophet who was to supply the place of Moses. The natural consequence, among certain classes of the population, whose ideas of the coming Kingdom of the Messiah were altogether carnal and worldly, would be an inclination to gather round the new Prophet whatever there was of floating discontent and revulsion at the many cruelties which characterized the administration of the present rulers of the Holy Land, and so lead to one of those bloody and short-lived revolts which were not unfrequent in the Jewish history of those times. Our Lord understood the danger, and provided against it at once.

‘Then Jesus therefore, when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him a King, fled again into the mountain Himself alone. And when evening was come His disciples went down to the sea.’ The danger against which our Lord had to provide was not for Himself. No one could come by force and make Him a King, unless He so willed it, and if He had chosen to proclaim Himself a King, no one could have resisted His arms, whether His followers had been few or many. As He said to Pilate afterwards, if He had

been a King in the sense in which Pilate used the word, and if His Kingdom had been a kingdom of this world, then His servants would have fought that He should not be delivered to the Jews. He could always avoid apprehension by the officers or soldiers that might be sent against Him, and if He had had any need of defenders, His Father would have given Him more than twelve legions of Angels. But though there was no danger to Him, there might have been an occasion for much cruelty on the part of Herod towards the poor people who might take part in the attempt to make Him a King. It would have been against the whole character of the dispensation of the Gospel Kingdom, to defend them supernaturally, and they would have fallen an easy prey to the bloodthirsty soldiery in the pay of Herod, who would ask for nothing better than to be able to flesh their swords in the massacre of a number of poorly armed peasants. Herod and others in his position hated and feared the multitude, and they were ever ready to use their military forces against them, in the expectation thereby of cowing them into more ready submission, and of winning some kind of approbation from their own Roman superiors, to whom they were responsible for the peace of those parts of the Empire over which their limited authority extended. And it would have been a circumstance of great disadvantage to the Church, if her infant days had been in any way darkened by the appearance of a political or national movement in support of her claims, whether that movement had been successful or not. For nothing is more entirely contrary to the whole spirit of the Gospel, than the identification with it of national interests and feelings.

This seems to explain the action of our Lord in sending away His disciples and dismissing the multitude. The disciples were at once sent to a place where there

could be no question of a popular rising, and they were separated both from Himself and from the people. The people were hindered from any immediate action by the knowledge that our Lord had not left the place of the miracle with His disciples. They might rest for the night and concert their plans for the morrow. And further, our Lord was to spend the night after this day of laborious teaching in solitary prayer. He had wrought a great miracle which was in itself a lesson, a promise, a prophecy, and it was His wont on such occasions, which were to have indefinite issues in the history and system of His Church, to spend the night in prayer, negotiating, as it were, with His Eternal Father the issues and success of the great sacraments which He had instituted or of the new arrangements which He had been making for the benefit of the world. While the Apostles were labouring and toiling wearily at their oars, making head against the strong wind which had arisen, He was quietly communing with His Father, and securing the blessings which were involved in the miracle by way of parable or prophecy. The people were resting around the foot of the mountain, those at least who had not set out, late as it was, for their homes. Then, in the depth of the night, our Lord made His way unperceived to the shore, and walked over the sea to the spot where the bark was, which contained His Apostles. This is another of those miracles of the Lake of Galilee which are best understood as prophecies of what was to be in the history of the Church.

‘And when they had gone up into the ship, they went over the sea towards Capharnaum. And it was dark, and Jesus was not come unto them. But the boat, in the midst of the sea, was tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary. And the sea rose by reason of the great wind that blew. And seeing them labouring in

rowing, for the wind was against them, and about the fourth watch of the night, He cometh to them, walking upon the sea. And He would have passed by them. But they seeing Him walking upon the sea, thought it was an apparition, and cried out. For they all saw Him, and were troubled. When they had rowed, therefore, about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking upon the sea and drawing nigh to the ship, and they were afraid. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Have a good heart, be of good heart, it is I, fear ye not.'

The description of the incident contained in the several Gospels gives us a picture of the natural fear, which even the Apostles could not but experience under the circumstances, for the near approach of the supernatural always frightens and appals us in our present condition. The Apostles must have shared fully the enthusiasm of the crowd, at the display of something like creative power on the part of our Lord. And this miracle was unexampled in kind, even among His own miracles, recalling moreover, as we see in the words of the people when they rejoined our Lord at Capharnaum, the early miracles of God in the preservation and sustenance of their forefathers in the desert. They were closer to our Lord than others, they were the instruments of the miracle, so to say, they knew more than the rest about the manner in which the loaves and fishes had been made sufficient for the supply of so large a multitude, and their hearts were full of joy and exultation. Perhaps they even thought that this miracle might be a prelude to some great onward move in the direction of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. However this may have been, it must be certain that they went down to the boat with hearts glowing with devotion and triumph, and it is probable that they had no thought

at all of the difficulties and anxieties of that night on the Lake.

The scene of the miracle is not certain, any more than the Bethsaida spoken of as the spot to which they were first directed in their voyage, for there seem to have been two places of the same name on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. But it seems likely that they were near enough to the head, or to the lower extremity, of the Lake, for it to be but a short voyage across to the spot where they were to meet our Lord as they thought. And it may have been that they expected Him to join them by land, as the multitude afterwards reached Capharnaum by land. Thus in this triumphant frame of mind, expecting but a short toil on the way, and then soon again to meet their Master, they had set forth on their night row across the part of the Lake before them. Then all had changed. The wind rose, they were struggling and making no way against it, the natural feeling of weariness after a day of so much exertion and excitement came on, the clouds obscured the moon, and she could not have been quite at her full, as it was a little before the Pasch, and in the darkness and loneliness and fatigue, and possible danger of the voyage, their hearts sank within them once more.

Meanwhile, no single feature in their condition was hidden from our Lord. His Heart was with them, in a far more perfect manner than the heart of the prophet of old was with Giezi on his way after Naaman. Our Lord had raised them almost to Heaven by His discourse and His miracle, and now, in His loving care for them, He was trying them with toil, anxiety, terror. He it was that permitted the storm, and now it was His time for testing their faith and love still more. The Evangelist tells us that He saw them labouring in their rowing, for what distance or what darkness could hide them from

His eye? And so in the late hours of the night, after toiling on almost in vain for so long, and when the dawn might soon be looked for, they saw this mysterious form approaching them, a human figure on the wild and storm-beaten waves, coming near enough to be close to them, and yet seeming as if it would pass them by. People usually shrink into silence before the preternatural, but their terror was so great that they cried out for fear, and then there came the well-known voice over the waters, 'It is I; fear not, be of good heart.' The voice of our Lord, and the great Divine words, 'It is I,' might have been enough to dispel all fear. But the storm did not cease, nor the winds fall, and their joy at seeing their Master so near had not as yet its full satisfaction.

'And Peter, making answer, said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid, and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretching forth His hand, took hold of him, and said to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? They were willing therefore to take him into the ship. And when they were come up into the boat the wind ceased, and they were far more astonished within themselves. For they understood not concerning the miracle of the loaves, for their heart was blinded. And they that were in the boat came and adored Him, saying, Indeed Thou art the Son of God, and presently the ship was at the place to which they were going.'

The miracle was perfect and complete in all its parts. The one failure is in the little faith of St. Peter, or rather in his timidity and fearfulness, when in the actual danger to which he had exposed himself without carefully, as it

were, reckoning on what it might be. His faith and love were aroused, and there is something very touching in his words, 'Bid me come to Thee on the waters.' He was so eager to get to our Lord that he could not wait, even if he did not still think that our Lord might go on and pass them by. Better to be on the waters with Him, than in the boat without Him, for where could there be danger when He was at hand, or if there were danger, what could be better for a loving heart than to share it with Him? It was in the Providence of God that he should join our Lord, for that would show, more than anything else could, the truth of the miracle, and that there was no phantasm, or optical delusion. It was the near presence and experience of the actual violence of the wind that made St. Peter fail. This is the experience even of apostolic men, as St. Francis Xavier says in one of his letters, that however brave, and resolute, and full of confidence men may be before the trial comes, still when they are in the actual neighbourhood of death, as is the case when men are in the midst of the sea in an apparently sinking ship, or the like, their hearts have an entirely new experience of terror, and nature shows itself in all its weakness. St. Peter had faith, but not faith sufficient for that perfect fearlessness which is required for the performance of a miracle under the circumstances in which he found himself when he had walked some way on the water, and found the wind raging against him in all its force. But in all other respects the miracle is perfect and lacks no detail, for the winds cease, the waves fall, and the boat is at once at the spot to which it was bound. The urgent danger forced St. Peter to revive his faith, and show it in prayer, and thus the design of our Lord on his soul was fulfilled. He had learnt his own weakness as well

as how to exercise his faith, and venture boldly out of love. There is no more toil, no more labour, no more anxiety, no more darkness, for our Lord is with them. The astonishment within themselves of which St. Mark speaks seems to signify that they were out of themselves and overpowered by astonishment, although it might have been expected of them to take this fresh display for our Lord's Divine power almost as a thing that might have been looked for, especially as they had lately had a proof of the same power in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Thus, in the last miracle on the Lake, when our Lord had been asleep in the storm, He reproached them for being alarmed, when He was there, even though asleep. They ought to have understood that where He was no danger could be fatal to them, that His protection must be over them, that all their condition must be known to Him, that He would not allow them to be too severely tried, and the like. And the words of St. Mark imply that the effect of the miracle of the loaves ought to have been different on them, they ought to have gained from that great display of power and mercy, so much of more perfect confidence in Him and His love for them, as to make it seem an easy thing to believe that He would not forsake them, or let them be too long tried by the weariness and alarms of that tempestuous night. Nor ought it to have been a marvel beyond easy credence on their part, if He chose to walk on the waters as on the solid land, and even to make one of themselves join Him there.

The lesson is full of mercy. For this is always the way in which human weakness of faith shows itself, we do not readily draw the conclusions from what we already know concerning the goodness and the power of God which they legitimately involve. We are always ready to think

that He cannot do twice what He has done once, that He cannot go a step beyond what we have seen, that He cannot do one wonder as well as another. Thankfulness, joy, gratitude, praise of His goodness, and the like feelings and affections, are all natural enough in those who have had the experience of the great mercies and wonders of God. But it is not reasonable that we should be altogether bewildered and astonished, in the way of which the Evangelist speaks, at some fresh display of these attributes of God, of which we have already had experience in other and similar instances. This is a tone of mind contrary to the perfection of faith and knowledge of God, and we see it constantly in the case of modern miracles, modern instances of sanctity, manifestations of the power of God or of that which He gives to His saints. Thus a large number of Christians profess to believe in the miracles of the Gospel, and will not accept those of the Church. Or they draw the line at a certain age in the life of the Church for the accomplishment of the promises to her. Or they will accept the histories of the saints of the early ages but not of later times. Or they will believe the manifestations of God's love, through our Blessed Lady, in the cases that are mentioned in the Breviary, but they will not think it possible that she can manifest the same tender charity for the people of God in the nineteenth century, or that there can be living saints who have the power of miracles in days like our own.

Timid believers of this kind are not wrong, if they receive all these things when they are presented to them, with caution, until the Church has spoken, but they are not right to deny their possibility and so set limits of their own to the power and goodness of God. The Evangelist speaks as if it were certainly a defect of faith that the Apostles were so overwhelmed

by this new manifestation of our Lord's power, as if the former miracle had been providentially intended to be the preparation of their hearts for the later manifestation. For he speaks of their lack of intelligence, especially with regard to the miracle of the loaves, not as to any other of the manifold exhibitions of great supernatural power on our Lord's part. And we thus get to the truth, that one of God's great mercies is constantly meant by Him to prepare us for another, that when we have received great favours from Him in answer to our prayers, we ought as a rule to ask for and expect more and more to follow. This is the difference between God and man, in conferring favours and gifts. Man may be expected to stop, to exhaust himself by one gift or series of gifts, but God only begins in order to go on, and it is our want of faith alone that stops Him, not any weariness in Him or want of power in giving. Thus, when Nathanael believed in our Lord on account of His saying that He had seen him under the fig-tree, our Lord at once told him that he should witness greater things than that in the future.

Like all the miracles on the Lake, this has been understood allegorically and prophetically by the Fathers. Our Lord is in Heaven, at the right hand of His Father, making His all-availing intercession. The Apostles are in the bark of Peter on the tossing seas of the world. The labourers of the Church toil in their rowing, for the wind, all the evil elements of society, are against them. The boat may be in danger, but it cannot sink. Our Lord will come to the relief of the Church, late in the night of the history of the world. He will seem almost to pass them by. He will appear like an unreal vision, for in the turmoil and confusion of earthly troubles and doubts, so it is that even the matters of faith sometimes appear. Then He will come into the

boat, all alarms will cease, He will receive the adoration of all, and the weary voyage will be at an end at once. Peter will walk the waters by the side of his Lord, but it will only be because his weakness is held up by the mighty hand that has promised never to fail the Church.

Our Lord's departure from the scene of the miracle was evidently unknown to that part of the multitude which had remained near the spot for the night. They had expected to find Him in the morning, and had perhaps formed during the night the project, so dangerous to themselves, which our Lord had disconcerted by walking over the sea to the boat in which He had set on His disciples. The Evangelists trace for us the movements of this part of the multitude. St. John tells us that 'The next day the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was no other boat there but one, and that Jesus had not entered into the ship with His disciples, but that His disciples were gone away alone. But other ships came from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they had eaten the bread, the Lord giving thanks. When therefore the multitude saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they took shipping and came to Capharnaum, seeking for Jesus.' This is the account given by the last Evangelist of the multitude that remained on the further side of the Lake during that night. He evidently mentions them because he is about to introduce the great discourse which followed in the synagogue of Carpharnaum, on the subject of the Blessed Sacrament. The ships or boats were sent from Tiberias, as it was evident that the multitude was wishing to cross back again, though it is most probable, indeed obvious, that only a part of the five thousand men could have come over by boat. Thus the multitude was much diminished in numbers, and thus a great part of the object of our Lord was gained, for He desired to get

them to their homes without attracting the attention of the officials of Herod. At the same time the presence of even a considerable portion of those who had witnessed the great miracle was most useful, for they served to make it known to others, and to draw public attention to the subject, so that when He came the next day to Capharnaum, and met His followers and others in the synagogue, the audience were prepared by what had passed, and by what had been said, for the doctrine which He laid down. It was certain to be a hard doctrine and one which would lead to many desertions, especially as it could not be fully explained until it came to be presented in the Church in connection with the great Sacrament, which answered at once the chief difficulties which were urged in the synagogue on this occasion. All these things have to be considered, in order to gain a full conception of the immense importance of this miracle in the development of our Lord's teaching on this great point.

But our Lord did not Himself land at Capharnaum, but at some spot in the neighbourhood, from which He proceeded on foot to the city, from which He seems to have been absent now for some time. The Evangelists say that when the Apostles with our Lord had passed over, they came into the country of Genesar, the land of Genesareth, that is, the country about Capharnaum, the scene of the greater part of His teaching hitherto. 'And when they were gone out of the ship, immediately they knew Him, the men of that place had knowledge of Him, and running through the whole country, they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was, and whithersoever He entered, into towns or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment, and as many as touched Him

were made whole.' The words seem to imply that our Lord went through some part of Galilee about this time, for the Evangelists who tell us this about the devotion of the people do not insert the long discourse in the synagogue of which St. John tells us. Nor do they speak directly of any sojourn of His in that city, though it is most probable that the dispute about traditions and the like, of which they do tell us, took place there and on this occasion. So we may take these words as a general description of the eagerness of the people, who had been more accustomed before than now to have His gracious presence among them, to avail themselves of it, now that it was vouchsafed to them for a time.

We may notice also an incidental effect of the miracle on the lady with an issue of blood, which had taken place on the last occasion of our Lord's presence in Capharnaum. If this miracle became public, as must have been the case, for our Lord had made her confess her whole story in public to the people in the streets of the city, it is most natural to find that the people should begin to beg for this particular kind of miracle, which, if it may so be said, made the healing of the sick more easy and more rapid, for they had not now to be presented to our Lord one by one, they had simply to touch in faith the hem of His garment. The faith of the Hemorrhissa spread like an infection, and it may have pleased our Lord to allow it so to be, especially after the evidence He had given that nothing of this kind could be wrought without His direct consciousness. And we may see in this permission of His which is here recorded, a true foundation for the Christian doctrine and practice with regard to relics, to holy places and shrines, healing wells, and the like, in which the healing power of the Sacred Humanity is communicated to material objects connected more or less closely with our Lord and His

saints, in a manner which is but an extension of the miraculous power here exercised through the hem of His garment. The Evangelists do not point out any connection between these two incidents in the Gospel history, but it is evidently not fanciful for us to see it in the simple facts as stated by them. The supposition that the miracle of the Hemorrhissa made a wide impression is confirmed by the curious story related of her by Eusebius and Sozomen,¹ that she erected a statue of our Lord in her own home at Cesarea Philippi, representing herself as kneeling in supplication before Him, and stretching out her hand as if to touch His garment, and that this statue became famous for the cures wrought by means of a plant which grew up from the ground at its feet, and reached the hem of the garment of the figure of our Lord. And Sozomen says that Julian the Apostate heard of the cures worked at this statue, and had the statue of our Lord changed for one of himself, which was miraculously thrown down. The Evangelists have not time to give us details about the spread of devotion consequent on the miracles of our Lord. But their words in this place seem curiously to illustrate the subject, in a manner which may easily be passed over, in our cursory perusal of the histories which they have put together with so much more care and deliberation as to their arrangement and connection than we are accustomed to suppose.

The description before us is, as has been said, a general account of what took place, not only on the day of our Lord's landing after the miracle of the loaves, but during His stay on this occasion, and His visits to this part of the country. We learn from St. John that He proceeded immediately to Capharnaum, there to meet the multitude which had crossed over from the

¹ Euseb. *Hist.* vii. 14 ; Socrat. *Hist. Trip.* vi. 41.

scene of the miracle, and to hold in the synagogue of that favoured city the great discourse from which we learn so much of the Catholic doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist.

CHAPTER IX.

The Discourse in the Synagogue.

St. John vi. 25—72; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 74.

By a prudent arrangement of His own movements, our Lord had now brought to Capharnaum a large number of those who had been present at the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, while at the same time He had avoided the danger to the crowd of the possible result of their enthusiasm in an attempt to make Him a King. It is clear that if, as we have supposed, His Sacred Heart was now full of the wonderful boon of the Blessed Sacrament, which had been so pointedly prefigured by the miracle just named, and if He desired to prepare the hearts and minds of His Apostles and others, for the reception of the great and difficult doctrine which His Church was to teach after Him, concerning this great boon, it must have been a part of His plan to deliver in some public place of teaching some commentary on the miracle, which might lead to the formation in their minds of at least the lineaments and outlines of the great doctrine to which that miracle had reference. This it was necessary should be done at once, while the marvel of the miracle was as yet fresh in their minds, for otherwise the words which He was to speak might seem to miss their full meaning. The discourse was necessary for the intelli-

gence of the miracle, but the miracle was also necessary as the foundation of the discourse. Thus we find that although our Lord had now for some time absented Himself from the city, and even the neighbourhood, of Capharnaum, He chose to be there now for a short time, for the sake of promulgating, at least fundamentally, the doctrine which was to fill so large a place in the dogmatic treasury of the Catholic Church.

The great discourse, of which we are now to speak, is related to us by St. John, and it is only natural to suppose that he has reported it to us in the same way as the other discourses of our Lord, which form the characteristic feature in his Gospel. Indeed, as has been said, it is clear that he might not have given us any narrative of the miracle itself, but for the sake of the subsequent teaching of our Lord, and that he has given both is an evidence that, in his mind, the two are inseparably connected. This discourse in the Gospel narrative is comparatively short, not with reference to other discourses, but with reference to the importance of the subject and the length of time which was probably occupied by the actual conversation or teaching of our Lord on this occasion. It is the manner of St. John, as indeed of St. Matthew also, to give us in our Lord's own words the heads of the discourses which he records, rather than the whole of what He said. The discourse before us was evidently one which proceeded gradually onward, our Lord taking advantage, so to say, of the interruptions by His audience, or of the effects produced upon them, as He went on, to add line upon line of the full doctrine which He desired to set forth. All through He claims their faith, and expects His word to be accepted as authoritative, and He also seems to add, after each break in the continuity of His words, some things still more difficult of belief than what had preceded. The

last and the greatest of the difficulties which are raised, He hardly explains at all, as we shall see. Its explanation is suggested by the miracle of the loaves, and also by the image of the manna. But no direct explanation is given as to the marvellous way in which the Body and Blood of our Lord are received as food, under the species of bread and wine. This must be remembered all through in our commentary. It is well to take a general view of the discourse, in its successive stages, before examining each stage by itself.

The discourse begins with the question of the people as to how our Lord came to be found at Capharnaum. They had seen Him send away His disciples, and remain Himself on the further side of the lake. Thus they had expected to find Him in the morning where He had last been seen, especially as they knew there was no boat that could have brought Him over. Our Lord answers nothing to this inquiry. 'And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?' There seem to have been some people in the boat as well as the Apostles, but whether they had published the new miracle of the walking on the waters or not, our Lord did not choose to refer to it Himself. He proceeds at once, in the report of St. John, to put His finger on the weak motives which had brought so many of them to seek Him on this occasion. 'Jesus answered them, and said, Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek Me not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled.' Thus He directly establishes the connection of the teaching which He is about to impart with the miracle of the loaves. And He goes on at once to raise them from the thought of the material bread which they had received at His hands, to that of a far more wonderful and powerful

Bread which He does not yet explain, but of which He says three things, that it endures to life everlasting, that it is the gift of the Son of Man, and that it is His gift because the Father has sealed Him. 'Labour not for the meat that perishes, but for that which endureth unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for Him hath God the Father sealed.' Thus the Heavenly Bread is at once put before their minds, as the chief subject of the teaching.

The next stage in the discourse is what it is, on account of the questions to which our Lord's former words led. 'They said therefore to Him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' taking up, apparently, the word which in the last verse has been translated by the English word 'labour,' and repeating it in the form of a question. The word is the same in both verses in the Greek. 'You bid us work,' they say, 'for the Bread of life everlasting; what are we to do to work this work of God?' Our Lord answers them by requiring their faith. 'Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe on Him Whom God hath sent. They say therefore to Him, What sign therefore dost Thou show, that we may see and may believe Thee?' For they reasoned rightly, that faith must be founded on some evidence, not of the things that are to be believed in, but of the Divine mission of the Person Who speaks in the name of God, and so claims belief. And then they go back at once to the evidence of the mission of Moses, which was in their minds in consequence of the resemblance between that evidence and the miracle which they had lately witnessed. 'Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.'¹ They seem to have attributed the words of the Psalm

¹ Psalm lxxvii. 24.

which they quote to the person of Moses, as if he had been the giver of the manna, instead of God. Our Lord corrects them, and at the same time goes further in the development of the doctrine which He has now to impart. In the former sentence He spoke of the bread that endureth unto life everlasting, which is to be the gift of the Son of Man. Now He speaks of the bread as something personal, as coming down from Heaven, and as giving life to the world. 'Then Jesus said to them, Amen, I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.' The original words may mean, 'He that cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.' There is therefore an advance in the teaching in this statement, and a preparation for the further doctrine which immediately follows.

'They said therefore unto Him, Lord, give us always this Bread !' The exclamation is like that of the poor Samaritan woman, when our Lord spoke to her about the water of life, 'Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come hither to draw.'² These people did not understand what our Lord meant, but they understood that He was speaking of some great boon, and so they broke out into a prayer that it may be given to them. Then He goes on to specify still more clearly the character of the gift. Before, He had spoken about the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, and now He says plainly that it is Himself. 'And Jesus said to them, I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.' And then He goes on to speak in general terms about the necessity of faith in Himself, and to connect

² St. John iv. 15.

the promise of the Living Bread with the resurrection to a new and perfect life. For this was in a manner more necessary, lest it might seem that He promised to those who eat of this Heavenly Bread that they should not pass through death, enjoying at once the everlasting life, which is the fruit of this Bread. And it may be supposed that He discerned among the audience some difficulty in receiving His words on this subject. 'But I say unto you, that you also have seen Me, and you believe not. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will not cast out. Because I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me. Now this is the will of My Father Who sent Me, that of all that He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of My Father that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day.' Here we find a number of new thoughts and ideas suggested by the words of our Lord, and we shall have to explain the passage presently, as far as may be, in detail. But the remark must be repeated here, that our Lord again leaves something which is most important to be the subject of future teaching. For He does not say how it is that He will raise men up at the last day.

This, then, is what we may call the third stage in the unfolding of the truths which our Lord desires to set forth on this occasion, and we can see that He has now got so far as to have declared that He is Himself the Bread that cometh down from Heaven, and so far also as to connect this statement with the future raising up, to newness of life and immortality, of those who come to Him and who believe on Him. There is not as yet a word about eating or drinking, except so far as that

idea is contained in the use of the figure of bread. We can gauge accurately the impression produced on the hearers by the next objection which the people present make. 'The Jews therefore murmured at Him, because He had said, I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus the Son of Joseph, Whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, I came down from Heaven?' They fasten on the statement about coming down from Heaven, rather than make any objection about His being the Living Bread. Our Lord answers this objection in the next paragraph or stage of the teaching, in which He first of all tells them that they cannot believe, unless God the Father leads them to faith, and, in the second place, insists still further on the necessity of eating this Living Bread, adding at the end the new and most startling declaration, that the Bread of which He speaks is His own Flesh. 'Jesus therefore answered them and said, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me except the Father Who hath sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, "And they shall all be taught of God."³ Every one that hath heard of the Father and hath learned, cometh to Me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, but He Who is of God, He hath seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say unto you, he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the Bread that cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of It, he may not die. I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever, and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.'

The advance of the doctrine here is quite evident.

³ Isaias liv. 13.

Our Lord does not explain away what He had said. On the contrary, He insists on it and adds to it a further statement, that the Bread of which He speaks is His Flesh. Nor can there be any doubt that it was in this way that His words were understood by those who heard them at the time. For St. John adds, 'The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' Our Lord again answers without in the slightest manner qualifying His words. 'Then Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say unto you, Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the Bread that came down from Heaven, not as your Fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.' Here, then, we have the true doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament set forth in the most solemn and dogmatic form before the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Nothing can be added and nothing can be taken from these Divine words as far as they go. They constitute by far the most explicit and definite statement on the subject of Holy Communion that can be found in the Gospels or in the New Testament. And yet there is still something kept back. There is nothing direct as yet about the Adorable Sacrifice, there is nothing direct about Transubstantiation. This doctrine may be discerned, so to say, lurking under the words of our Lord, for after speaking of the eating and drinking of His Body and Blood, He goes on to speak of eating of

that Bread. The Bread, therefore, which is to be eaten is the same as the Flesh and Blood of our Lord. But the doctrine which is discernible to Catholics who possess the teaching of the Church, was still veiled from those to whom our Lord was speaking in this place.

It would seem that here at last is a pause in this great discourse. Our Lord had finished the teaching on the subject in the words last recited. And St. John adds, 'These things He said, teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum.' He adds that in consequence of this teaching many of the disciples forsook our Lord. In the former part of the chapter, he had told us how they murmured or objected, which is what is done when the discussion is continued on the same spot and at the same time. But it is something different to say, that the disciples, or many of them, hearing what had been said, complained of the hardness of the doctrine. And it is not of the Jews that St. John now speaks, but of the disciples themselves. Nevertheless, it may be quite as well to suppose that the following words also may have been spoken on this occasion, especially as they contain the one explanatory clause which occurs in our Lord's whole statement. Many, therefore, of His disciples, hearing it, said, This saying is hard, and who can bear it? But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at this, said to them, Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before! It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning, who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray Him. And He said, Therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to Me unless it be given him by My Father.' Here again

it is to be noted that, if the time had come for the full statement of the manner in which the Body and Blood of our Lord are to be made our food, He might have given a different answer from that which He did give. But He had Divine reasons for not completing His doctrine at this time, and it was not completed until the very eve of His Sacred Passion.

In order to complete this preliminary statement of the whole teaching of our Lord, we may add here, before further explanation of the several parts of this discourse, the remainder of the statement of St. John in relation to this whole subject. 'After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve, Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for this same was about to betray Him, whereas he was one of the twelve.'

What has been said may suffice as a general survey of the whole narrative of St. John in the passage before us, a survey which enables us, in some degree, to see at once the gradual advance of the discourse from an undefined promise of a Bread from Heaven, the efficacy of which shall be nothing less than the production of eternal life, to the specific and particular declaration that this heavenly food is to consist of the Body and Blood of our Lord Himself, eaten and drunk., Our next step would naturally be the consideration of the several stages in the discourse which have been already indicated. But it will be better, before proceeding to this, to make a few general remarks which may illustrate the discourse as a whole.

In the first place, the connection between this discourse and the miracle on which it is founded is clear, and necessary for the intelligence of the doctrine. We have another instance in the Gospel history of a similar connection, indeed, more than one. The first may be said to be the instance of the miracle of the healing of the paralytic, who was let down through the roof before our Lord in a house at Capharnaum.⁴ In that case our Lord Himself made the connection clear, by saying to the man whom He was asked to heal, Thy sins be forgiven thee, instead of bidding him arise, and walk. And when objection was made, though apparently rather silently and in thought than openly, to the doctrine implied in His words, namely, that the Son of Man had power to forgive sins, our Lord worked the miracle of his healing, in order to show, not so directly that He had the power to forgive sins, as that He was sent by God to teach men, and for that purpose His mission was authenticated by miracles, and that therefore the power that His words seemed to claim of forgiving sins must be accepted because, being a messenger from God, he did so claim it. And the truth, which lay behind, and was the foundation of any right reasoning on this matter, was the axiomatic truth, that God could not give a man power to work miracles, and at the same time allow him to teach false doctrines, and that therefore the doctrine he might assert, even if it seemed novel and hard, must be accepted on faith.

There is another truth to be noted at the same time. There was in the miracle that He wrought on that occasion something which represented the truth which He proposed to their belief. The miraculous release of a man from the bodily suffering and impotence of the paralysis was a faithful picture of the release of the soul, in the

⁴ St. Matt. ix. 2—9; St. Mark ii. 1—14; St. Luke v. 17—28.

spiritual order, from the bonds and impotence of sin. In this case, then, we have first the assertion by our Lord of His power to forgive sins, as implied in His words to the paralytic man. Then we have, in the second place, the proof of His authority to claim such power in the name of God, by the working of the miracle, which, in the physical order, represented the forgiveness of sins in the spiritual order. And then, at a later period, the doctrine is fully set forth and completed, as to the exercise and the ministers of the power thus asserted, when our Lord first promised and afterwards gave to the Apostles the power of remitting and of retaining sins,⁵ in words which are the full and dogmatic foundation of the whole doctrine and practice of the Church concerning the Sacrament of Penance.

The miracle related by St. John, in the chapter previous to this narrative of the miracle of the loaves, is another instance of the connection between miracle and doctrine, though in a different way from the former. In that case our Lord worked the miracle in a manner calculated to force the attention of the Jewish authorities to His claims and to the evidence for them. For He chose the Sabbath-day for the miracle, and in this way brought on Himself the persecution and opposition which were already latent in the hearts of those who were so soon to become His bitter enemies. In that case, then, the effect of the miracle was to bring before their minds the long series of arguments which are summed up in that fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. John. The miracle had no distinct reference or resemblance to the doctrine. It was simply a new authentication of Himself, except in so far as it might have revealed to them the greatness of His dignity, by His assumption of power which showed Him to be, as He afterwards said, the Lord of

⁵ St. Matt. xvi. 19, xviii. 18 ; St. John xx. 22.

the Sabbath. For He not only worked the miracle on the Sabbath, but bade the man who was healed take up his bed and go to his home. But in the case now before us, the miracle precedes the doctrine and is its foundation, as in the case of the healing of the paralytic, wherein it represented something which was contained in the doctrine, namely, the cleansing of the soul from sin, as the body was cleansed from disease by virtue of the miracle. This is the case also in the miracle of the loaves. It represents something which is a part of the doctrine, namely, the feeding of men by the Body and Blood of our Lord, as the five thousand were fed by the multiplied loaves and fishes. And in the case of all three of these miracles, there is also the foundation of the doctrine in the miracle, because in these, as in all other cases, the evident presence of Divine power in our Lord supports His teaching by the authority of God, Who cannot possibly cooperate to false teaching, or give the support of miraculous works in the case of a preacher of lies.

In the case of the miracle and teaching before us, the connection is based on the impression produced by the multiplication of the loaves on the minds of the people, who followed our Lord to Capharnaum, and also on the resemblance between some of the wonders that are contained in the Blessed Sacrament, and the features of the miracle itself. The miracle itself answers in more than one point to the continual miracle of the Eucharist, inasmuch as the presence of our Lord's Body and Blood in each particle and in every portion of the consecrated Host is a multiplication, something like that which took place with the five loaves. There is another resemblance in the fact that the miracle consisted in the feeding of so large a multitude, as regards the body, and that the Blessed Sacrament is the food of the soul. The people

fastened on the resemblance between the manna in the wilderness and the feeding of the five thousand, in which they saw a fulfilment of the promise that the Prophet Who was to come would be like Moses. They saw also in this power of feeding the multitudes, something that would enable our Lord, if He were made King, to support His followers in the desert, and so secure the existence of the kingdom.

On this account, then, our Lord takes from them the image of the manna, and uses it in His discourse, rather than that of the multiplied loaves. For the image of the manna was the most familiar and the most famous, and it enabled Him to dispense with speaking of His own miracle, which was in truth a kind of echo of the giving of the manna. The use of the image of the manna opens also the way to the use of a number of Scriptural texts on that subject, for the Sacred Scriptures speak often of that miraculous bread in passages which are prophetic of the Blessed Sacrament. Thus the miracle of the loaves connected the doctrine of which He was desirous to speak, both to His disciples and to the multitude, or to the multitude in the presence of the Apostles, with the most famous, because the most permanent, of the Old Testament miracles, and that on which depended the whole existence of the sacred nation during forty years of wandering in the desert. It was reasonable that there should be, in the New Kingdom, something which answered to this great miracle of the Old Testament, and when the Blessed Sacrament is considered in this light, we have abundant reason for glorifying God on the far more beautiful provision which He has made for us. And it is right to notice specially the adoption, in this instance also, of the Providential rule, according to which the great gifts of God in the Church are first anticipated in the Old Testament, made

the subject of thanksgiving, commemoration, praise, and the like, and then introduced in the New Testament in a manner which turns the devout mind back to those earlier anticipations, while at the same time the Christian fulfilment very far transcends the figures by which it was foretold. In one respect the multiplication of the loaves was like the feeding of the people by the manna, namely, that in neither case was the food such as to last in its effects beyond the ordinary time. And thus we find our Lord beginning His discourse with a contrast between the meat that perisheth, with that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give.

Another general remark, which may be prefixed to our more particular consideration of the several stages of this discourse, is founded on the defective temper of mind and motives which meet our Lord in those to whom He is speaking. The discourse begins with the question of the people to our Lord, how He came to Capharnaum. Our Lord, as has been said, does not answer this, but He begins at once to blame them for the motives which have led them to Him, motives of temporal comfort and support, rather than the high and ready faith which the miracle ought to have awakened in them. Thus we have at once a kind of antagonism between our Lord and His audience, an antagonism which is at work all through the discourse, and to which He more than once alluded. He wished to raise their hearts and minds to a gift very far transcending that miraculous food which they had received. In the instruction which He wished to impart to them concerning this food, great faith was needed, and this great faith ought to have been generated in them by the miracle. On the other hand, the effect of the miracle on them had been much more to make them desire

and hope for a continuance of such temporal benefits and nothing more, than to make them desirous of the instruction He had to give, and the marvellous promise He was to make. Nor was their faith as yet high enough for them to receive this promise.

The antagonism of which we have here an instance is not that which our Lord had to deal with in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem. In that case there is a decided hostility and captiousness almost from the very first. In the case of this multitude, our Lord has to struggle against dulness, deadness, pettiness of mind, the grovelling thought that cannot soar, the limited intelligence that cannot penetrate, the cold heart that cannot take in the wonderful goodness and power of God. This multitude represents the poverty of the intelligence of man, left almost to himself, in his present state of exile, rather than the malice of which the human heart is capable when Satan gets a footing in it and rouses it into enmity to the truth. Even without the influence of the cunning enemies of God, the world stands staring and gaping, as it were, at the marvels of Divine love, and has neither eye nor heart for them. Our Lord deals with them with infinite patience and gentleness, though He speaks as if He were surprised at their dulness.

Our Lord reproves this dulness at the very outset of His discourse, and He says many things as He proceeds which show how much it is in His mind as the great impediment with which He has to contend. But for this, we may suppose, He would simply have proposed to their faith, enlightened and kindled by the miracle which they had witnessed, the doctrine which this passage contains concerning the Blessed Eucharist. And it might have been expected that they would not at once understand it, especially as He said nothing

on this occasion concerning the manner in which He was to make them feast on His own Body and Blood in the great Sacrament of His Love. This truth would have been to them as so many of the things which our Lord spoke of to His Apostles—hidden and incomprehensible until the time came for the Holy Ghost to illuminate their understandings concerning our Lord's words, but not the less full of light and doctrine when that time did come. But, as a matter of history, we can trace this dulness working in their minds all through, and notice our Lord's constant reference to it as He goes on.

We see it at once in their reply, in the next stage of the discussion, after our Lord has claimed their faith, as the work by means of which they are to prepare themselves for the further and greater gift which He has to bestow. For they ask at once what sign He has shown, on which their faith may be grounded. As if the whole of His Ministry had not been a chain of signs, and as if the single miracle of the loaves had not been sign enough. They puzzle over the manna, as if they meant to insist on that sign and on no other, still harping on the food of the body, and seemingly eager for nothing more. Our Lord goes on to speak to them of the Bread of Life, and He speaks of its effects, though, at first, in a guarded way, and He adds immediately some words at considerable length about their unbelief, and much more about the blessing of belief, according to the decree of the Father. He does this in what may be called the third stage of the discourse, which follows on the promise of the Bread from Heaven, and which precedes all mention of His Flesh and Blood as that Heavenly Food. And in the next stage He turns to a different part of the same subject, namely, the necessity, for the faith in

which they are so deficient, of the personal leading and teaching of God the Father—that personal leading and teaching which enabled St. Peter, in the concluding passage of this chapter of St. John, to set aside all difficulties, by simply answering our Lord, ‘To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life,’ and of which our Lord Himself afterwards spoke in His commendation of the faith of the same Apostle, when He said that flesh and blood had not revealed the truth to him, but His own Father Who is in Heaven. And it is very natural to suppose that this dulness of theirs was one, at least, of the great reasons why He did not explicitly add, on this occasion, that part of the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament which we have spoken of as reserved, namely, the explanation that His Body and Blood were to be made the food of men by the stupendous miracle of Transubstantiation.

At the same time it is necessary for us to remember that the discourse before us could not have been intended by our Lord to cover the whole of the great subject to which it refers. The Blessed Eucharist is a Sacrifice as well as a Sacrament, and Its sacramental character grows, as it were, out of Its sacrificial import. As a Sacrifice, it presupposes the Sacrifice of which It is a memorial and, in the proper sense, a renewal, the Sacrifice of the Cross. This discourse occupies its right and preordained place in the gradual unfolding of the great mystery to which it refers. But there are parts of that mystery, as is evident, which our Lord only mentions by allusion and by hint. These parts are especially the Sacrifice of the Cross, the Sacrifice of the Eucharist in Its relation to that Sacrifice of the Cross, and the mystery, as has been said, of Transubstantiation. Our Lord seems to have these in His mind, and to speak in a manner which implies them,

providing thereby against more than one difficulty which His words might create in the minds of His hearers. Thus, up to a certain point, He only speaks of the Bread from Heaven. Then, as it seems of a sudden, we have the statement that the Bread which He will give is His Flesh. This would be enough to startle the audience, and then He adds at once an allusion to the Sacrifice of the Cross. 'My Flesh for the life of the world, or which I will give for the life of the world.' Immediately after this we have the language changed: instead of His Flesh only, it is the eating of His Flesh and the drinking of His Blood of which He speaks, and He continues this language to the end of the discourse. A devout, intelligent, meditative mind, guided by the Holy Spirit, might have divined from this language the truth that the Body and the Blood of our Lord, separated on the Cross by a separation which caused His Death, would be so far separated in the new mystery as to represent thereby, truly though mystically, that Sacrifice, and became the Food of the soul by conveying Its fruits thereto, as well as the pledge and seed of eternal life. In any case, the words might have served to show that the most carnal interpretation of His words could not be the true interpretation, and this would be confirmed by the few words of explanation which He gave after the discourse, in which He spoke of His Ascension.

Thus, in the words of our Lord in this discourse there are two strains, as it were, interwoven, and sometimes one is prominent, sometimes the other. The one is the strain of Divine manifestation of high and new truths, how He is the Bread from Heaven, how the Bread which He will give is His Flesh for the life of the world, how, in order to have eternal life and to be raised up at the last day, men must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, and the like—that is, the whole

doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, in which the Sacrifice is also included. The other strain is the necessity of faith for the reception of this doctrine which He now proposes as the authenticated Messenger of God, the misery of the want of faith, the blessings which await those who believe, the manner in which faith is generated by the teaching of the Father, the cause of the absence of faith in the absence of the teaching of the Father, not because He will not teach all, but because all will not listen to His teaching. Our Lord's words strike first on one of these notes, and then on the other, the interruptions and murmurings and difficulties of the audience continually, as it were, recalling Him from the exposition of heavenly doctrine to the dulness and miseries of those to whom that heavenly doctrine was addressed.

It may seem as if there had been no great need for the preservation of so much of our Lord's teaching on this occasion, which had direct reference to the dulness of faith in that particular crowd of hearers to whom the discourse was addressed. But it must be remembered that it is the way of God to bring good out of evil. Here, in an especial manner, He made the hesitation and doubt and dulness, and even the far worse qualities of malice and hostility, which are to be found, some among the friends, some among the enemies of our Lord, serve to the greater elucidation and illustration of the truths which He had to teach, or which were involved in His actions. Thus we have been greatly the gainers by the hesitation of St. Thomas, by the rivalries among the Apostles, by the questions which they so often put to Him, even when He had to reprove them for their dulness of faith, and the like. In the case before us it has been an immense gain to the Church that our Lord should have spoken so plainly

and so strongly about the necessity of faith, and about the manner in which faith is produced in the soul, with especial reference to the great doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament. For that marvel of Divine love requires the constant daily exercise of Christian faith, in a manner of which it may be said that it is hardly found with regard to other Christian mysteries, and that we all have constant need of the teaching of the Father and of the active lively faith in the words of the Son, quite as much as these crowds had need of the same graces, to enable them to understand this discourse in the synagogue at Capharnaum and to accept its truths. The Blessed Sacrament is, in a manner and to a degree of its own, the mystery of faith, as it is called in the Canon of the Mass. It is in the world, age after age, the 'sign which shall be contradicted,' of which holy Simeon spoke to our Blessed Lady. And we ourselves should have the greatest need of this part of the teaching of this discourse, even if the audience to whom it was addressed had not been so poorly furnished with faith. Thus these remarks of our Lord are as practical to us as they were to the crowd assembled in the synagogue.

There is yet another general remark to be made, before we enter on the detailed consideration of the discourse. This remark relates to the very frequent mention of the Father, and to the large part assigned by our Lord in the passages before us to the decree, the will, the action of the Father. It is nothing wonderful to find our Lord so constantly speaking of His Father, when we know that His Sacred Heart was occupied with the thought and love of Him with an intense and unbroken attention. This attention shows itself almost every time that we have any recorded words of our Lord to comment on, and we may con-

sider that, even if the Divine truths which He was uttering did not require it, the affections of His Heart would have brought the name of His Father perpetually to His lips. But no such loving exaggeration, so to say, of the work and office of His Father was possible with our Lord. Still it requires to be noted, how the will and operation of the Father are continually meeting us in the discourse. In the first place, it is the 'sealing' of the Son of Man by God the Father that is the cause of His giving to men the Food that does not perish, but endureth unto life everlasting. Then it is said that the work which God desires of the people is that they may believe in Him Whom He hath sent. Then it is said that it is the Father Who gives the true Bread from Heaven, which cometh down from God and giveth life to the world. Then our Lord says that they do not believe in Him, but that He will not cast out any one who comes to Him, Who is given to Him by His Father. He came down from Heaven, not to do His own will, but His Father's, and the will of His Father is that of those whom He has given to Him He should lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day. And then this is explained further, the will of the Father is that every one who seeth the Son and believeth in Him may have life everlasting, and that the Son will raise Him up at the last day. Then when they murmur at the thought of His having come down from Heaven, He tells them that no one can come to Him, except the Father Who hath sent Him should draw him, and that such persons He will raise up at the last day. Then comes a distinct instruction as to the action of the Father. No one can come to Him, except the Father Who has sent Him, 'draw him. Then this is confirmed from prophecy. Then He says that every one that hath heard of the Father, and learned, comes to Him, and

this again is explained, to avoid the danger of misconception.

It is also very remarkable that this language is entirely changed when the doctrine is proposed which is to be accepted on faith from our Lord. When He comes to speak of the distinct doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament, He does not say that this is the direct teaching of the Father. The teaching of the Father is the whole process which brings men to our Lord, Whom He has sent. But when they come to Him, it is His office, and the office of the Church after Him, to impart the distinctly Christian doctrines, such as that before us. So the whole of the doctrine about the Bread of Life, the Flesh of our Lord which He will give for the life of the world, the necessity of eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of the Son of Man, the everlasting life and the raising up at the last day of those who do so, their abiding in our Lord and His abiding in them, is set forth by our Lord as His own teaching. This is the doctrine for which the faith of the multitudes, as of all Christians after them, is required. The foundation of this faith is the teaching of the Father leading them to our Lord as the Messenger Whom the Father has sent. But it is for the Messenger to deliver the special truths entrusted to Him. The only reference to the Father, therefore, in the latter part of the discourse, is that contained in the illustration, which is also a dogmatic truth, 'As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.' The chain of statements concerning the Father contained in this discourse might be considered and meditated upon, apart from the particular doctrine which is the primary object of the discourse, the doctrine of the Bread from Heaven, which becomes definite and precise as the doctrine of the Blessed

Sacrament. Every one of these Divine words is in its proper place, and there is nothing omitted which it was our Lord's purpose then to set forth, as there is certainly nothing superfluous.

CHAPTER X.

Faith in the Son of Man.

St. John vi. 25—72; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 74.

THE last chapter has set before us a number of general considerations concerning the great discourse of our Lord on which we are engaged. We may now proceed, in the light of these general truths, to trace, one by one, the various stages into which the discourse naturally divides itself. These stages are marked out for us, partly by what we are told of the people who formed the audience in the synagogue of Capharnaum, partly by our Lord's own precise and dogmatic assertions, first of one great truth and then of another. These assertions disclose to us, as they go on, more and more clearly the doctrine on which it was now His purpose to insist as a matter of faith. They only stop short of a complete exposition of the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament as it has ever been taught in the Catholic Church, because, as has been said, the time for the institution of that Adorable Sacrament had not yet come, and thus the final explanation of the promise that He would give His Flesh and Blood to us to eat and to drink could not be given, as it was to be given at the time of that institution. Nor could our Lord as yet speak of His Sacrifice on the Cross. There had been a kind of anticipation of one

great feature in these mysteries, in the earliest of our Lord's miracles, in which water had been changed into wine. That miracle was, in the counsels of God, a distinct prophecy of the marvel of Transubstantiation. It was a prophecy which made it easy for the Apostles to receive our Lord's words at the Last Supper with implicit faith, and it sheds great light on the doctrine of the Church, by showing us the true meaning of the Divine words of consecration. But this was still to come. So far, then, the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist was unfinished without it. It had been the same with the doctrine concerning the power of the keys in absolution. This had been prefigured in a miracle, then it had been asserted in so many words by our Lord, then it was made the subject of a promise to the Apostles, but it was not finally complete until our Lord, after the Resurrection, gave them the power of absolution, with the gift of the Holy Ghost for that purpose. We begin now with the opening passage by which the present discourse is introduced.

The people, who had followed our Lord from the other side of the lake, began naturally by asking Him how He came at Capharnaum, not having sailed in the boat with the Apostles. But if our Lord gave them any satisfaction as to this, it is not recorded by the Evangelist. The account in St. John proceeds at once to the point of the direct instruction given by our Lord. The first thing He says to them is by way of reproach, reading their hearts, and seeing there the imperfect and earthly motive which brought them after Him. 'Jesus answered them and said, Amen, amen I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled.' It was not that the miracle had not impressed them, but because what had most impressed them and most influenced them was the fact that they had been fed, whether miraculously or not.

If the miracle had been something else, such as the stilling of the storm, or the casting out of devils, it would not have brought them to Him. They had a selfish purpose in their following Him, and this selfish purpose was earthly, and material also. The object of God's Providence in ordaining the evidence of miracles, in the case of our Lord and of the Church after Him, was indeed, secondarily, the relief of human miseries, hunger, and thirst, and sickness, and suffering, and the like. But this was a purpose subordinate to the great object, of drawing to our Lord, and to those who were to speak in His name after Him, the faith of the people, who might, by means of that faith, be led on to their own salvation. The object of these people was to profit, if so it might be, again and again, by the miracles of the mercy of God, without making any progress in faith, or being more inclined than before to listen to the teaching of which the miracles were the Divine authentication.

It is easy to understand that the miracle of the loaves must have raised hopes and anticipations in the minds of the people altogether new. Up to this time they had had nothing of the kind done for them, although there is some resemblance to this in the other miracle which has reference to the Blessed Eucharist, that of the water turned to wine. In each of these miracles our Lord had gone beyond the relief of disease, infirmity, the deliverance from devils, and the like. He had stretched His miraculous compassion into the region of ordinary wants, not of the most pressing kind. Those who were relieved by the other miracles were saved from pain, from positive disease, from the incapacities and infirmities and miseries which are the effects of the paralysis of natural powers, which reduce the sufferers to a state of something less than full life, to what is the beginning and the anticipation of death. But to supply food, bread and wine,

and the like, by means of miraculous power, is to change the whole conditions of human life, as it is ordinarily arranged by the dispositions of Providence. As a matter of history, the Israelites in the desert were raised above the common conditions of human existence. They had no need to labour, to sow or reap, to toil or spin, for their 'garments were not worn out, neither were the shoes of their feet consumed by age.'¹ The tradition of this marvellous existence lingered among the people, and they seem to have thought that the last miracle of our Lord was a kind of beginning of its restoration. Thus they had said that He was of a truth the Prophet Who was to come into the world, the Prophet Whom Moses had promised, like himself. What might not be hoped, even in the display of temporal and material power, from such a Prophet?

Our Lord goes on to reprove these earthly and worldly motives, and to raise their souls to something higher, according to the intention of God in granting them this miraculous evidence. 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you.' If their desire had been listened to, they would gladly have gone on day after day, receiving the bountiful provision which had once been granted them by God. But this was not the true benefit which He intended them to receive from the miracle which they had witnessed. When He says, 'Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth,' He does not mean them to take no care for their temporal sustenance, according to the disposition of Providence, by which men are born to labour in this world, and by which the means of daily sustenance are necessarily the first natural object of the majority of mankind. It is He that has made the effect of earthly

¹ Deut. xxix. 5; 2 Esdras ix. 21.

food only temporary, in order that we may again and again feel the same needs, and by them be driven to that labour of providing for ourselves and our families which is the common lot of us all. But He means that this is not to be the chief object of our industry, for the sustenance of the soul is a higher thing than that of the body, and temporal things must so be cared for that we may at the same time be acquiring eternal goods. Now the intention of God in granting the miracle was not to provide for the temporal sustenance of the multitude, but first to use their necessities to draw out the compassion of our Lord, and then to use this miracle of compassion to draw their hearts to faith in Him, so that they might receive the Bread of Life which was foreshadowed and represented by the loaves which had been multiplied. After such a miracle their hearts should have flown to higher things, and not lingered over the temporal benefits which they had received.

An old tradition tells us that the bridegroom and bride at the marriage in Cana came, after the miracle of the water changed into wine in their favour, to throw themselves at our Lord's feet, to offer themselves as His disciples, and that from that moment they resolved, in gratitude for the manifestation of His power, to live in continence as brother and sister. This old tradition represents the elevating and purifying effect which our Lord's miracles were meant to have on those in whose favour they were wrought. Thus we read that after the miraculous fishing by the Apostles, at the word of our Lord, they left all, and followed Him.² There may have been something of the same kind in the effect on the mind of the man out of whom the legion of devils was cast, when he begged our Lord to let him remain in His company.³ These are instances in which temporal bless-

² St. Luke v. 11.

³ St. Luke viii. 38.

ings, miraculously received, served to raise the mind to higher things, and to nerve the will to loftier and holier attempts in God's service. Such is the effect ordinarily intended by God when such benefits are bestowed. Our Lord's words show that He at once perceived the deficiency in their aims and desires, their failure to correspond to the designs of God, a failure which might easily render them incapable of the further boon He had to bestow. His own Heart was dwelling on that Heavenly Food which He was preparing for the world, which had been prefigured in the manna given to their fathers, as well as in the loaves and fishes which had been made the subject of the last miracle. No doubt He was disappointed to find their minds so ill-prepared for the revelation and promise concerning this Heavenly Bread of which the miracle had been as it were the first note. It is as if He had said, 'the Son of Man has better food for you than that which you have now received on the mountain-side across the lake. It is not meat that perisheth, which has to be continually renewed, day after day, which, after all, can only support this temporal and passing life. It is Bread that abides in Its effects throughout all eternity, long after It has ceased to be administered to you day after day in the Church which I am to found.'

The words 'which the Son of Man will give you,' imply that they did well to come to Him, if they had come for the right purpose, and in search of the right kind of food. It was quite true that He had drawn them to Himself by the gift of temporal food. But they need not go to any one but Him for the true and living Bread which was to endure to everlasting life. The reason why He will give this food is, that God the Father has sealed Him, that is, as it appears, that God the Father has conferred on Him His own Godhead, because He has united to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ the

Divine Person of His own Son, and therefore 'sealed' it with His Divinity. From this it follows that Jesus Christ is God and Man, and therefore most perfectly the giver of the Food of eternal life. The order of the words in the Greek is, 'for Him hath the Father sealed, God,' as if to express more forcibly that the sealing consists in the Divine union of God and Man in the Person of our Lord, as if it had been said, for Him hath His Father sealed with the Divine Nature. There can be no participation or imparting of life everlasting, but by some communication with God, Who is alone Life, and the Author of life. And He Who is Life in Himself must be alone able to impart life to others, in whatever way or measure it seems good to Him. But the miracle of the loaves was, in the intention of our Lord, a promise and a pledge that He would feed man in the most perfect and lasting way, and this can only be by the strengthening of the weak and failing human nature by some Divine food, which would give eternal life. As the healing of the diseases of the body was a promise and a prophecy of the healing of the diseases of the soul, so the refectation of the body by the miraculous bread was a promise that God not only could furnish food unto eternal life, but that in His own time and way He would do so. This then is the Bread that it is worth while to work for, to aim at, to seek, to pray for, and the Person from Whom it was to be sought was He Who had wrought the material miracle, and Who, being sealed with the seal of the Divinity, must have the power of feeding unto eternal life, while His compassion for their bodily wants showed His willingness so to do. This willingness is now solemnly professed and declared by our Lord in the words before us.

All these considerations are included in the words of our Lord about His own 'sealing' by God the Father.

The fundamental meaning of the expression is that which has been mentioned in the first place, namely, that the Son of Man is sealed by God with the seal of the Divinity united to His Sacred Humanity. This Divine union makes Him the Author and Fountain of life, and therefore able to impart it, in what measure it may please Him, and in what manner it may please Him, according to the capacity of those to whom He may choose to impart it. But the words imply also, not only that the Son of Man can give food that endureth unto everlasting life, but also that He is willing and desirous to do this, if only those for whom He intends so great a blessing do their part, labouring, not for the meat that perisheth, but for this Divine Food. The proof of His willingness and desire to do this had lately been given to them in the miracle of the loaves, which again may thus be considered as a 'sealing' on the part of God the Father of the Son of Man, because it had been an exercise of miraculous power, one of the signs which God had given to Him to work, whereby His mission was authenticated, His compassion and His benevolence displayed, and a solid foundation furnished to them for their faith in His word. He was now about to make an appeal to their faith in setting before them the doctrine in which was to be conveyed the promise of the food which endureth unto life everlasting. In this sense a seal was set by God not simply to the power of our Lord, and to the truth of His Divine Person, but also to His commission to teach, and to feed the people in the way He speaks of, to His willingness to do so, while at the same time the hearts of the people were prepared for this great boon.

These words of our Lord, then, set before the multitude two things—one, that there is a Meat that endureth unto everlasting life, and the other, that there were certain works to be done by means of which this Food

might be obtained from the Son of Man. The work by which it is to be obtained is one thing, and the food itself another. 'They say unto Him, What shall we do that we may work the work of God?' They call this work the work of God, in the same sense in which our Lord has told them to work for the Meat which endureth unto everlasting life. It has already been said that the word is the same in both places in the original. Thus the work of God of which they speak is not the work which God alone can do, but the work which He desires on our part, in order to the Divine work which He will Himself perform in giving us, if we correspond to His favours, the food of eternal life. And this is here called 'a work and a labour, because faith is an act of the will directing the intelligence, an act which implies exertion, good will, resolution in the overcoming of difficulties, consisting in the slowness of the mind and the coldness of the heart towards God, His laws and His truth. It is a work which any low passion may impede, and which, as a matter of history, the greater mass of mankind accomplish with difficulty.

This is clear also from the answer of our Lord. 'Jesus answered and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent.' Faith is indeed the work and the gift of God, but it requires the cooperation of the human will and intelligence, and it is this part in the formation of faith of which our Lord speaks to them as the work of God which they can do.

This was the one great and pressing need of their souls at that time, that by prayer and reflection, and a careful guard of their conscience, an acting up to the light which they had, and an earnest search for more, they should render themselves fit for that further teaching which He had in store for them. If they had been faithful, He would even have raised them to far higher

knowledge of God than they as yet possessed, and which He was yearning to impart to them. Their case was that of thousands of others in all times of the Church, with whom God has been dealing in His merciful Providence in the way of illumination and elevation, who reach a certain point in the path along which He would lead them, and are thus brought up to a critical moment in their spiritual life, when they are to make a choice between docility of mind, which may cost them something, and the rejection of greater light, which will involve their losing what they have already gained.

Simple as is the answer of these people, it still shows that they were in danger of making the worst of the two choices presented to them. For they begin at once to cavil at His authority, whereas it was on that very authority alone that they ought to have received what He was going to propose to them. They do not say, as St. Peter, that He had the words of eternal life, to whom should they go, how could they hesitate as to this work of God which He required of them? They do not say, like the poor father of the lunatic boy after the Transfiguration, Lord, we believe, help Thou our unbelief. Their answer is only too like that captious demand for a sign from Heaven, which our Lord had already refused to listen to when it was made by His enemies. They asked for what they already had. For our Lord was continually insisting that the miracles which He wrought were the sufficient grounds for faith in His word. ‘They said therefore to Him, What sign therefore showest Thou, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, “He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.”’

It is remarkable that it is our Lord Who introduces the subject of the food which endureth to life everlasting,

without naming the manna. The people fly at once to the reference, and seem to have in their minds some indistinct notion that the miracle of the loaves implied a kind of claim to the same power which had been exerted in the feeding of the people by the manna. At the same time they seem to have thought that the feeding of the five thousand, which occurred only once, was not so great a sign as that of the manna, which lasted for forty years, and also that the logical inference from the miracle of the manna was not so much as that which our Lord claimed from them, in consequence of the miracle of the loaves. Moses did not require the people to believe in him in the same sense as our Lord, Who spoke in a way which demanded not simply faith in His word as a messenger from God, but faith in His Person as the Messiah and the promised Son of God. And indeed it was true that the simple performance of the miracle by a Prophet proved only that God was with him. They forgot that the presence of Divine Power with the worker of miracles, whether in God Himself or Moses, was quite enough to secure faith to whatever the worker of the miracle might teach on the part of God, for the reason already mentioned, that God cannot cooperate with falsehood. Moreover, there were circumstances about the way in which our Lord wrought His miracles which could not be found in those of any of the prophets. He worked them as the Master of Nature, and they worked them by means of prayer, at the command of God and as His ministers.

‘Then Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but My Father giveth you the true Bread from Heaven, for the Bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.’ The words about Moses may be understood in two ways. They may be taken as

meaning that the bread which Moses gave was not truly bread from Heaven, especially in comparison with the true Bread from Heaven which His Father was giving in the carrying out the counsel of the Incarnation. Or it may mean that it was not Moses that gave the bread, such as it was, which is called bread from Heaven, but God the Father, Who is now giving the true Bread from Heaven. Both senses may be combined, as if the words meant, it was not Moses that gave to them what was given, but My Father, nor was it the true Bread, for He is now giving you the true Bread, which has those qualities of giving life which were wanting in the manna.

And then our Lord goes on to tell them in what consisted the inferiority of the manna, as compared with the true Bread from Heaven. The manna was not, as they supposed, taking literally the figurative and prophetic words of the Psalms, the Bread of Angels, as if the Angels were fed upon it in the way in which men feed on common bread. It was the Bread of Angels, because it was a prophecy and a type of the true Bread, by which, in the Holy Eucharist, men are to be fed on the same Divinity, the communication of which to them is the life and the food of the blessed Angels. It was the Bread of Heaven figuratively also, for the same reason, but it came in truth from the air above the earth, where it was formed by the hands of Angels, and it fell on the ground, as hailstones or flakes of snow fall on the ground. But from that true Heaven, in which the blessed Angels enjoy for ever the presence and the sight of God, and are thereby sustained in life everlasting, the manna did not come any more than the hail or the snow. The heathen had their legends about the food of the gods, the nectar and ambrosium, and these people may have taken the

words of the Psalm in this carnal sense. The true Bread from Heaven is that of which the manna was a type, and which is promised to you in the miracle of the loaves. It is in truth Bread from Heaven, for It is He that is always in Heaven, the true Heaven where God dwells. It does not fall from Heaven, nor is It sent down from Heaven, but It comes down of Itself, It is He that comes down into this lower world in the Incarnation of the Son of God. And It gives life to the world, to the whole world in a certain sense, not only to those who receive It, because the Incarnation is virtually the life of the whole human race, and it is even the redemption, as St. Paul tells us, of the material universe itself. The whole race of men will rise at the last day by virtue of the Incarnation. And the life which this Bread gives is eternal and undying, not as He says presently, like the life which was prolonged from day to day by means of the manna.

‘They said therefore unto Him, Lord, give us always this Bread.’ They did not understand what they were asking for, for their minds were still full of the thought of the manna, or of the loaves which had been multiplied, and their words remind us of the words of the poor Samaritan woman, as has been said. As she asked that she might not thirst nor go to the well to draw, so they thought of the boon which might keep them in perpetual life without more ado, whether by its reception once for all, or by its continual supply. This last sense is more in accordance with the words which they use, for they say give us always this Bread, go on giving it us always. They had a kind of faith, but not a perfect faith, and their notions concerning the Bread of Life had not yet risen above the bread which supports the bodily existence day after day. Our Lord had taken a step in advance of His former declaration of His

words about the Bread of Life, which came down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world, and now He makes this declaration still more explicit, by saying that He is Himself the Bread of which He speaks. He says that He is Himself the Bread of Life. He does not say that they must eat or drink Him, for that would have been too rapid an advance on His former statements, but He speaks of the effects of food, or of the want of food, in connection with Himself. 'He that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall not thirst.'

Here then He speaks as having a claim and right to be believed, a right founded on the miracles which He had wrought. To come to Him and to believe in Him are not different effects, any more than to hunger no more or to thirst no more are different effects. The meaning is the same as if He had said, He that cometh and believeth on Me shall not hunger or thirst. To come to Him is more than to believe in Him, in one sense, and in another to come to Him is the fruit of believing in Him, for it implies union with Him, submission to Him, obedience to Him, the placing in His hands our will, and making Him the guide of our life. In this sense to believe comes before coming to Him, and in a general sense therefore it may be said that the words may be understood of faith in our Lord. But they are qualified and made precise in their meaning, by the former words of which they are the explanation, in which He declares Himself to be the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven, and by the use of the images of hunger and thirst. There is therefore included the latent though the necessary sense of the food of the soul, by means of which there is to be no more hunger and no more thirst. That is, it is signified that our Lord will not only give to those who come to Him and believe in Him the Bread of Life, but that He is

Himself the Bread of Life of which He had said such wonderful things.

Having claimed their faith as His due, our Lord goes on at once to point out how it is that they have not believed Him. They were asking for fresh miracles, and He had already, over and over again, won their faith as His right by the miracles which they had seen. The true cause of their unbelief He now points out in a manner which might strike their souls with awe and compunction, for it implied that they had been neglectful and disobedient to the teaching of His Father. They had spoken of the evidence of miracles as that which they required, and it was right, in a certain sense, that faith should be rested on the manifestation of the presence of God with Him Who claimed their faith. But there was something else requisite, without which even the evidence of miracles would be addressed to them in vain. What was this other thing which was requisite, without which faith could not be formed in their hearts? It was the grace of God working in their hearts, without which evidences are in vain. Men are always inclined to take the grace of God for granted, as it were. It is true that God does not deny His grace to those who use with faithfulness what they have already. But there is a state of the heart and mind which shuts out the grace of God, and when this state exists, the most powerful miracles and evidences, of whatever kind, fail to produce conviction, or at least to produce faith. This state especially prevails in those who have already trifled with their opportunities, been deaf to the calls of grace, turned away from evidences, shut their eyes to the light which was offered them. These men seem to have a kind of obstinacy about them, for they imply that they insist on His giving them just that particular kind of proof which they demand,

that is, a repetition of the miracle of the manna. So the Chief Priests taunted our Lord, when He hung on the Cross, saying that if the King of Israel would come down from thence, they would believe. Thus these men deserved the reproach which is addressed to them by our Lord. For they had had evidence enough, and yet He could see that they would not believe Him, now that the time had come for Him to claim their faith in this great point of His teaching.

‘But I said unto you, that you also have seen Me, and you believe not. All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out. Because I came down from Heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.’ When and where our Lord had said to them in so many words, that they had seen Him and had not believed, is nowhere mentioned in the Gospel history. It is the characteristic of such histories now and then to refer to things and sayings which have not been mentioned, because they relate the words as of our Lord, in which this reference is made, although the things referred to have taken place without being recorded. But it is not difficult to find the place where our Lord had said this in substance. He had said it in substance in the answer which He gave to the question of the disciples about His teaching in parables, when He had found a reason for this comparatively obscure and difficult way of teaching, in the dulness and hardness of the hearts of the people to whom He has been preaching, saying that ‘seeing they had seen and had not perceived, and hearing they had heard and had not understood.’⁴ This was their general characteristic, and even the disciples were not altogether free from this dulness and slowness of comprehension. In the case of the priests

⁴ St. Matt. xiii. 13—15; St. Mark iv. 12.

at Jerusalem, He had said, in the discourse delivered to them after the miracle at the Probatic Pool, that they could not believe, because they sought honour one from another.⁵ This moral defect prevented them from believing, and if that was the case with them, the case with others was similar to theirs. And now He speaks of this action of Divine grace, which works in those who do not place any obstacle in the way of the formation of faith in their hearts, as the working or drawing of the Father, as His giving the soul to Himself, as His leading the soul to Himself. He speaks of it generally, and so gently, without applying His words directly to them, leaving the application to be made by themselves, and He speaks also affirmatively rather than negatively, partly perhaps for the same reason of tenderness and gentleness, partly also that He may take the opportunity of dwelling, in His own Sacred Heart, on the happy and consoling side of the matter, instead of on the side of disappointment and failure.

‘All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out. For I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.’ If those who believe in Him come to Him and are not cast out by Him, and if the dull-hearted listeners to the discourse in the synagogue of Capharnaum did not believe in Him, then the words imply that they were not among those given to Him by the Father, not among those whom He would receive and not cast out. But this He does not say again, having once said that they did not believe. His words range over the whole world, Gentile as well as Israelite, and represent to Him the millions of believers whom He will make partakers of His bounties, and for whose sake He will be willing to forego,

⁵ St. John v. 44.

perhaps, many whom His natural feelings might have led Him to choose first, those of His own nation, His brethren according to the flesh. Many of those who are to come in this way to Him, by the gift of the Father, are now considered outcasts, for they do not belong to the commonwealth of Israel. But to Him they will not be outcasts, because they are given Him by His Father, and because it is His Father's will that they should be partakers of His treasures. He seems to appeal from the dulness and incredulity of His immediate hearers, to the multitudes who would not be incredulous. and at the same time He warns those hearers most terribly of the danger of not listening to the guidance and teaching of the Father. Not to listen to that guidance and teaching is the same thing as not being given by the Father to our Lord, and, in consequence, as being outcasts from the blessings which He has come down from Heaven to impart.

Our Lord repeats three times over the mention of the will of the Father Who sent Him. First, He says that He is come down from Heaven not to do His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. Then He adds that this is the will of the Father Who hath sent Him, 'That of all that He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.' Then in the third place He says that 'this is the will of the Father Who hath sent Him, that every one who seeth the Son and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise Him up at the last day.' The intelligence of the whole passage, therefore, depends on our grasping the meaning of these three consecutive sentences, in which the same truth is set forth in an ever increasing degree of plainness and clearness. When our Lord says that He has come down from Heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him, He speaks of course

of His Incarnation, in which He is present on earth, being the Son of God Who is in Heaven. The object, then, of His presence on earth in the Incarnation, is, in the first place, to do the will of His Father Who has sent Him. Here He speaks of His human will, because as God He has the same identical will with His Father. The will of God, which is thus declared to be the first and principal cause of all that our Lord does in the Incarnation, is the Divine will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. When our Lord says that He is come not to do His own will but that of His Father, He does not mean that His own human will is, or can be, contrary to that of His Father. He means that the will of His Father is the rule of His life and of all that He does, and that His human will is perfect in its devotion to the Divine will, and performs whatever that Divine will desires, with all its intensity and energy and joy and resolution.

The Sacred Heart wills the salvation of men with a power and a devotion of which no one but Himself is capable. And yet He wills it, notwithstanding His love for man, because the Father's will is that He should will it, and accomplish it. For He loves us because His Father wills that He should love us, and because His Father so loves us as to give Him to us to be our Saviour. Thus the contrast, if there is a contrast, is not between the freedom of one who is not sent by another and the obedience of one who is sent by another. It is between the power of the Divine will in imparting force and intensity to the human will of our Lord, by the manifestation of its own desire, and the love which our Lord might conceivably have had for us if He had not been sent by the Father for that purpose for which He was sent. How then is it possible for Him to cast out any one whom the Father gives Him, when He is come on purpose to do

the will of His Father? He sees in the persons of those who are given to Him, the expression of the very will to accomplish which He has come down from Heaven.

The next sentence carries on a little further the explanation of what it is not to cast out any one whom the Father may give Him. 'This is the will of the Father Who sent Me, that of all that He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.' Not to cast out, then, is the same thing as not to lose, but to raise it up at the last day. We have other words of our Lord which seem to explain to us what He may mean by losing what is given to Him. He said in His prayer to His Father, before going to the Garden of Gethsemani, 'Those whom Thou hast given to Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the Scriptures may be fulfilled.'⁶ And again, in the account of the scene in the garden at the apprehension of our Lord, St. John says, after telling us how our Lord had enjoined on His captors to let the Apostles go their way, 'that the word might be fulfilled which He said, of those whom Thou gavest me I have not lost any one.'⁷ Thus Judas was already lost when our Lord made His prayer, though that was before the accomplishment of the betrayal, and the Apostles might have been lost, if our Lord had not provided for their safety by shielding them from the temptations they might have been exposed to, if they had been taken prisoners with Him. But our Lord must here speak of the loss which is final and irrevocable, when the soul is separated from Him altogether, and beyond remedy, by dying in sin.

And yet His watchful Heart may see this loss in a soul at the moment when it shuts its ears to grace, as Judas had hardened his heart before his final perdition. The

⁶ St. John xvii. 12. ⁷ St. John xviii. 9.

loss of a soul is often decided practically by a step which is not the last in the process of perdition. Our Lord speaks of that which is in truth the immense loss and misery of the soul itself, as if it was in a certain sense His own loss, a kind of failure of His own, and so a diminution of His glory and blessedness and triumph throughout all eternity. And, on the other hand, He speaks of the avoidance of this loss and defeat, as if it were His own victory and His own great happiness, as if it were a great glory to Himself to raise up one more in the last day. When He says, 'Not one of them is lost' except Judas, it is like One Who speaks of the greatest treasures that could have been committed to Him, and the words of the Evangelist about His disciples not being lost, on account of His watchful care over them in protecting them from danger and temptation, seem to show us how constantly this thought is in the Sacred Heart of our Lord, that He must preserve those whom His Father has given Him with the utmost care and forethought.

Our Lord goes on, in the next sentence, to explain still further what He has said about the will of the Father. He varies the expressions which He has used, in order thereby to make His meaning more plain and more full. He repeats the words, 'This is the will of My Father Who sent Me,' but instead of the words, 'All that He hath given me,' He uses others, 'That every one who seeth the Son and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day.' From this we gather that it is the same thing to be given by the Father to our Lord, as to see the Son in His Incarnation and to believe on Him. And it is the same thing to have life everlasting, and not to be lost, or not to be cast out. He goes on in the following part of the discourse to insist on this still further, but what He

now says is worthy of all our consideration. Those who are given to Him by the Father, are those whom the Father guides by His Providence and by His grace to the sight of Jesus Christ, and to belief in Him. They do not believe what they see, but they believe what they do not see, and therefore He means that, seeing the Son in His human nature and form, like other men, they nevertheless believe Him to be, not what they see, but what they do not see, the Eternal Son of God, God of God. Those who have this faith both see the Son, and believe in Him, as the Son of God in human flesh. And this is the giving of them to Him by the Father, because this true faith can only be in those to whom it is given by the Father, and it is given to them by the Father that they may go to the Son and may give themselves to Him by their faith.

To this faith life everlasting is promised. Faith is the condition of life everlasting, which cannot be forfeited unless the life of those who have the faith is in contradiction to their faith. And then, as it seems, to avoid a possible mistake which might arise in their minds, as if those who had this faith were so to have life everlasting as never to die, our Lord adds that He will raise up at the last day him who has this faith. The life everlasting will then be given to him in possession, having been his before in promise and in right. But he will first pass through the stage of death, which is appointed to all men by a law which is not cancelled, even as to those who have the right to life everlasting.

There are occasions in the course of some of the discourses of our Lord when He seems almost to be soliloquizing, rather than addressing Himself to the audience before Him, although we know well that this was not the case. What He said He meant them to hear, and He ordered His words with perfect wisdom

and prudence for their benefit, and for our benefit for whom the words are recorded. Yet sometimes He seems to open to us the thoughts and feelings of His Sacred Heart, as if in that also there was an immense boon for us. The passage on which we are now engaged is one of those in which we may find many revelations, so to say, of the thoughts and feelings and motives of the Sacred Humanity. There are four great topics of thought suggested by it. In the first place we may note His devotion to the will of His Father. We have already said a few words on this. The will of His Father did not constrain Him, as if there could be any opposition between His own will and the Divine will. But it added to His choices and actions and purposes an immense weight of power, of intensity, of strength, of constancy, and above all, perhaps, of joy. Every choice which He made in obedience to the will of the Father was an act of the intensest love for His Father, an act which so conformed His will to that of His Father as to make it, even His human will, Divine and god-like. That most perfect pliancy and docility which characterized His human will in its correspondence to the Divine will, gave it a beauty and a strength and a might and a purity and a joyousness, which have nothing like them, even in the most perfect choices of the angels and the saints. It added a fresh lustre to the works which He accomplished for the salvation of men, glorious as they were in themselves.

Another thought with regard to these choices of our Lord, in obedience to the will of His Father, is found in the words in which He speaks of those who come to Him by faith as being given to Him by His Father. Under this expression are contained two great thoughts. In the first place, it contains the thought of all that has been done by the Father in His Providence to bring

about the coming of these souls to our Lord. Thus, for instance, when St. Peter, in the name of the Apostles, made his great profession of faith at Cæsarea Philippi, our Lord spoke of his blessedness because flesh and blood had not revealed to him the truth which he confessed, but His own Father Who is in Heaven. The history of each of the souls of that Apostolic company, in whose name the confession was made, was a history of the most beautiful and delicate and powerful dealings with that soul on the part of the Eternal Father of our Lord, the object of which dealings was the gradual training of that soul in the faith which at last it attained in fulness, when the time came for the confession. Thus our Lord could dwell on the whole of this most marvellous and beautiful process, in each case, and this would be the subject of immense rejoicing and satisfaction to His Sacred Heart.

This is the first thought. But there is something more, as has been said, in this expression, because it implies a personal action of the Father in giving the souls to our Lord, as well as in preparing them for Him. In all gifts which pass between those who intensely love, the thought of the Giver is the principal element—it adds a preciousness to what is most precious, if so it be, and it gives a priceless value even to what is not in itself valuable. The reason is that the gift represents the giver, and it represents the immense love with which the giver gives it, and this is in itself an appeal and a provocation, so to say, to reciprocate love on the part of him who receives it. And these souls are not simply presented to our Lord, as jewels are given by a friend to his friend, they are sent, or brought, or given, to our Lord, in order that with regard to them He may do His great work of salvation, and accomplish in them the commission which He received from His Father Who

sent Him into the world. Thus these souls are given to our Lord as the objects of His special love, and of His special beneficence. They are given to Him as if the Father had done His part, and now asked His Son to do His. They are given Him as the materials, so to say, out of which He is to make His Kingdom, and win His victory. He is to pour out on them the treasures of His love, He is to triumph in them, they are to be the trophies of His conquests. That is to be accomplished in them of which our Lord speaks to His Father in His prayer, 'That they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.' He sees in each of them the gift of His Father, and not the gift alone, but the Giver and the love with which they are given, and the joy and triumph which are to be His because of the perfect accomplishment of His work in them. This is a separate joy from that which consists in doing with regard to them exactly and fully the will of the Father.

Another thought which is contained in these words of our Lord is that of the character of the work which He is to accomplish in them. It is no light or transitory work. He describes it in very few words. First it is that He will not cast them out. Then it is that they shall not be lost, but raised up at the last day. Then this is somewhat expanded, where He says that the will of the Father is that they should have life everlasting, and that He should raise them up at the last day. These words convey little in comparison to us. They represent great realities and great acts of our Lord, which are different, indeed, in His mind and in truth, from what they are in our poor conceptions. It is a great thing not to be cast out, not to be without a share in the great work which our Lord came on earth to do, from which, nevertheless, very many who were intended by Him to profit by it are excluded for faults of their own,

which compel Him to say to them that He never knew them, and even in this life to leave them outside His Kingdom. It is a great thing to have life everlasting, even only in expectation and promise, to have a right and title to it, of which nothing but ourselves can deprive us. It is a great thing to be raised up by our Lord at the last day, not by that universal and common resurrection which will be the lot of the whole human race, in consequence of the Incarnation, but by that glorious resurrection which is to be the condition and the beginning of the true eternal glories of the saints in light. The glories and delights of the body, the glories and delights of the soul, the unfading crowns, the ineffable bliss in the companionship of the blessed angels and saints, and the inconceivable and yet not unsupportable rapture of the Beatific Vision—these are words and little more to us. But to our Lord they were the realities on which His Sacred Heart continually dwelt, and which inundated Him with joy when He reflected on how many millions of souls most dear to Him He was to confer them, as the consequence of the Resurrection which was to be His own work. He mentions them here, because they were the truths which it was fit should now be set forth to this dull-hearted multitude, but they were nevertheless the source to Himself of joy inextinguishable and unutterable.

And there is something still unmentioned in the words before us, implied though not fully expressed in the truth that He is to raise up the blessed at the last day. He will raise them up as His own members, as parts of Himself, as united to Himself with a tie so close and so inseparable, that it will be closer even than that sacramental union with Him in Holy Communion which is now a foretaste of Heaven, and which has so much

mysterious connection with the resurrection and the future life of glory. It will not only be His work, as the creation was His work, but it will be a raising them to a participation of His own life. He will live in them, and they in Him, He will enjoy in them the vision of ineffable bliss, He will see God in them, and partake in them of the unalterable peace and tranquil possession of all goods of body and soul which will be their lot for ever. Every glory and every joy will be His work, and it will come back to His own Heart as a fresh joy and glory of His own.

Our Lord's intelligence, then, of these wonderful boons which He was to bestow throughout all eternity on those whom the Father gives Him, must have been a distinct element on the prospect to which His Sacred Heart was now occupying itself. And there is yet one more subject of importance, contained in these words, or rather contained in what we know to be, as it were, wrapped up in these words. It is not our Lord's design, in this part at least of His discourse, to explain fully how it is, by what means, or by what actions of His own, this great effect is to be produced of imparting eternal life and raising up the faithful at the last day. He has laid down the principle from which all this result is to flow down. He has said that He is the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven. He is the principle, therefore, of everlasting life in His Incarnation and Sacred Humanity. When He speaks of the Bread of Life, He hints at the truth and at the particular manner in which He will impart that life of which He speaks, and plant, as it were, in the human body the seeds of the future resurrection which it is to owe to Him at the last day. For if Life is to be conveyed as from Bread, it must be by the way in which bread supports natural life.

Life might be imparted as light, as by rays from the

sun, or it might be given as the air which is breathed, and the like. But in that case He would not have called Himself the Bread of Life. We know from the miracle to which this discourse is attached, as well as from the continual direction given to it by our Lord, by the successive truths which He adds to what has been given before, and most of all from the plain and unmistakeable language in the later sections of the discourse itself, that our Lord had in His mind from the very beginning the marvel of the Blessed Eucharist. After a time, as it were, He restrains Himself no longer, and He forces on them, little prepared as they were, the truth concerning this great miracle of love. And when, as it were, He lets His words flow on without check, we see that He connects the reception of His Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament with these two fruits, resurrection at the last day, and everlasting life. It is right therefore to say that the earlier passage includes also the thought of the manner, in which the results of His love to those whom the Father has given Him are to be brought about, by means of this Heavenly Food. This will have to be explained a little later on, when we come to the words in which this truth is more directly enunciated. In the meantime we may remind ourselves that here also is a head of ineffable consolation to the Sacred Heart. Not only are these great results to be produced by Him, not only are they to be to Himself the cause of such wonderful joy. But they are also to come about in consequence of a continual excess of love on His part to which there is no parallel, even the giving His own Flesh and Blood to those whom He loves so much to be their food. He said Himself that there was no greater love, than to give His Life for His friends. But if anything could be greater than the love shown by dying for them, it must surely be that love which makes

Himself not only once their Victim, but day after day, their food, securing to them eternal life.

‘The Jews therefore murmured at Him, because He had said, I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, I came down from Heaven?’ All our Lord’s words about faith, and the giving of the Father, and the life everlasting, and the raising up at the last day, were lost on them. They went back to the difficulty created by their own dulness and incredulity, the difficulty founded on His human nature and apparently common origin. The sublime doctrines contained in the few last sentences of our Lord were all nothing to them. They seem to have caught at His words about the Living Bread, and to have understood Him to say that it was He that came down from Heaven, as indeed the same meaning is conveyed by His words that He is the Bread of Life and that He came down from Heaven not to do His own will, but that of His Father. What He might mean by the Bread of Life, they did not ask, nor whether the wonderful miracles which He had wrought did not give Him a right to their faith, even if He seemed to claim some dignity or power which they did not understand.

Thus all the evidences of His Divine Mission and character are set aside, and they fix on the evidence, as they think, that He is a mere man like themselves, and that therefore He could not have come down from Heaven. He is to them Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother they know. He is not even John the Baptist risen from the dead, or the prophet that should come into the world, or Elias, who had been caught up into Heaven, and so might have come down again, He is only the Son of the carpenter of Nazareth. So un-

reasonable are men when they are determined to make objections to supernatural truths. They shut their eyes to the evidences which reason ought to force them to admit, and they take no account of sublime doctrines, however full of promise and beneficence to themselves. When He had spoken to them of the Bread of Life, they had cried out, 'Lord, give us always this Bread,' and now that He has told them of the will of the Father, and of all the blessings which He is bound by that will to procure for them and impart to them, it might be expected that they would say, Lord, let Thy Father give us to Thee, Lord, let us have this everlasting life, Lord, raise us also up at the last day! But they say nothing of the kind, for they are blinded by their grovelling prejudices that in Jesus the Son of Joseph there can be nothing great or wonderful, however inexplicable may be His miracles, however unearthly the power of His words.

'Jesus therefore answered and said to them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me except the Father Who hath sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.' The murmuring among themselves could only be rightly founded on the supposition that He had said something impossible or wrong, in claiming to have come down from Heaven. But the truth was that He had not claimed anything at all for which His miracles might not have prepared them, and which they ought not to have been ready to receive on His word, if they had made due use of the evidences which had been accumulated in His support by the Providence of the Father, Who was also ready to supply that which was necessary to make the evidences take hold of them and produce in them the required faith, namely, to give them His Divine interior grace corresponding to the external witness of the miracles and the

other proofs of His Mission. Their not receiving the truth which He had asserted concerning Himself, did not depend on the weakness of the proof or on the impossibility of the thing to be proved, but on the absence in their minds and hearts of the grace requisite for faith. If this was the thing wanting, then the proper remedy for their difficulty was not to murmur against Him Who had said the truth, but to seek to repair in themselves the deficiencies which prevented them from closing with the truth which He asserted. This could only be done by the working of the Father, and therefore the proper means for them to take would have been the earnest supplication to the Father to have mercy on them, and to enlighten them.

Thus our Lord's words most perfectly answer to the present needs of their souls. He might have reproached them with their dulness, with their unreasonable obstinacy, with the moral faults, the worldliness, and the like, which fastened their hearts to the ground, as it were, and prevented in them the formation of the first elements of faith. But He does not reproach them or rebuke them, except indirectly. He only points out to them the way by which they might even yet be brought to a better mind. 'No man can come to Me, except the Father Who hath sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day.' He speaks of God as the Father Who has sent Him, as if to imply that it belongs to God, when He sends a prophet or a messenger into the world, also to act on the souls of those to whom the messenger is sent. The doctrine and the messenger may both be Divine, and yet there is still the work of grace to be done in the hearts of men, without which the good seed will have been cast abroad in vain. And it cannot be thought of God, that He would ever send external means of grace, without also being ready to give the interior graces

corresponding thereto to those in need of them. But, when the Father has thus drawn men to His own envoy, that will take place which He has already said would follow, namely, that the Son Whom they see and believe in, will execute His commission for which He was sent, and raise them up at the last day. And so, though they might think of Him only as the Son of Joseph, His word would certainly be verified, and He would raise men up at the last day as He had said, and this would be in itself a sufficient proof that He was the Bread of Life which came down from Heaven.

Our Lord then confirms His assertion respecting the drawing of the Father by the words of one of the great prophets, who had foretold that, in the times of the Messias, the whole people, and all mankind, would be taught by God. The prophecy is mainly one of the conversion of the Gentiles to the Church, and her consequent enlargement. And in the course of the prediction the words are found, ‘All thy children shall be taught of God, and great shall be the peace of thy children.’⁸ Our Lord says the prophets, and not only the prophet, for this kind of prediction is repeated in other places, as for instance in the great passage of Jeremias, in which the prediction of the virginal Conception is contained, ‘A woman shall compass a man.’ In the same chapter Jeremias goes on to speak of the new Covenant that God will make with His people, ‘Not according to the Covenant which I made with their fathers. . . . But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel in those days, saith the Lord, I will give My law in their bowels, and I will write it in their hearts, and I will be their God and they shall be My people, and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know

⁸ Isaias liv. 13.

the Lord, for all shall know Me, from the least of them even unto the greatest, saith the Lord.'⁹ He goes on, 'Every one that hath heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me.' It seems that the distinction between hearing and learning amounts to this, that some who hear will not learn, but that all who learn must first have heard. The learning is not without their own cooperation, and it generates faith in the soul. The hearing is the enlightenment offered to them by God. In truth, there are two kinds of hearing, the external hearing of the Word of God by the mouth of teachers and witnesses sent by Him, and the interior listening to the same Word which is the work of grace in the heart. These two things make up that teaching of the Father, which our Lord here declares to be necessary. It is so necessary, that faith cannot be without it, and as this interior teaching of the Father was that which was wanting in these people in the synagogue of Capharnaum, our Lord insists on it as the one requisite.

Thus for the generation of faith, which had not taken place in these listeners to our Lord, there are in truth more things than one necessary. The outward preaching of the Word is necessary, and the attention and goodwill of the hearers themselves are necessary, and beyond these, the interior teaching of the Father by His grace, corresponding to the external Word, and aiding the human consent and readiness, is necessary. So necessary is this, that, as has been said, our Lord speaks of this alone, in the same way, it may be said, as He speaks of the accomplishment of the will of the Father and not of His own will, as the one reason why He has come down from Heaven. Because the power of the Divine command laid upon Him for the salvation of mankind moved His human will so forcibly and over-

⁹ Jer. xxxi. 32—34.

whelmingly as to be the one great motive on which it acted, burning as was the Sacred Heart for the very same accomplishment of the salvation of mankind. So in this process of the genesis of faith, which our Lord describes as coming to Him. Men come or come not by their own free will, that is, they do not come, if they do not come, because they do not choose to come. But if they come, they come willingly, yet their own willingness is not enough without the aid of God. Our Lord might have reproached these people for their unwillingness to believe. But instead of reproaching them directly, He says they do not come, because they have not been willing to be assisted by God, and thus are both unable and unwilling, unable because unwilling, though their ability would depend on God not on themselves.

The whole process is drawn out in the passage of St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, in which he expresses his thankfulness to God for their faith, 'because that when you had received of us the Word of the hearing of God, you received it, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed, the Word of God, Who worketh in you that have believed.'¹⁰ Here we have the external word of the preacher, for faith cometh by hearing, and the willing listening of the hearers, and beyond all these, the working of God in those who have believed. For it is Paul who plants, and Apollo who waters, but it is God that giveth the increase. It was this last element, the working of God in their hearts, which was wanting in these people to whom our Lord was delivering this great discourse, and therefore they were not able to receive the truths which He set before them, claiming their faith in His word as that of One Whom God had accredited to them by

¹⁰ 1 Thess. ii. 13.

miracles and other evidences. As to their inability, it was occasioned by the want of the teaching of God in their hearts, but this was so, not because God was not willing to teach them, but because their hearts were not fit to receive His teaching on account of their own obstinacy. The action of the Father had not taken place, but it had not been refused to them arbitrarily. It had been hindered by their own fault.

To make His teaching still more clear, and also, it seems, for the purpose of shutting out a possible misconception, our Lord adds the words which follow. 'Not that any man had seen the Father, but He Who is of God, He hath seen the Father.' It follows, therefore, that this teaching or drawing of the Father, which is necessary for the formation of faith, is a teaching which is not received in the ordinary way, as when a master has his disciples around him and they listen to his doctrine. This is the way, more or less, in which the external teaching is carried on, of which St. Paul speaks in the passage just now quoted. The teaching of the Father is invisible and spiritual, it is addressed to the heart and soul, like all the other whispers of grace. It accompanies the external teaching, in the case of those who receive that external teaching in a simple and childlike spirit. But our Lord's words explain that it is interior only, and does not conflict with, or remove the necessity of, the external teaching of the messengers of God. And it was quite possible that these people to whom He was speaking on this occasion, so literal and unspiritual in their minds and hearts, might think that He was really speaking to them of the necessity of some sensible and tangible and external communication between those whom the Father was thus to teach and the Father Himself.

It was necessary therefore to assert the great truth,

that no man hath seen the Father, and that the only One Who has this right to speak in His Name and to state the truth concerning Him, as knowing Him, is the Son Himself Who is of God, that is, Who has from Him by generation the Divine Nature itself. It is the same doctrine which He had laid down to Nicodemus, when He found him hesitating and making difficulties about what He told him as from God: 'No man hath ascended into Heaven, but He that descended from Heaven, the Son of Man Who is in Heaven.'¹¹ And we find the same truth at the opening of this Gospel of St. John, whether in the words of the Evangelist himself, or in those of the blessed St. John Baptist: 'No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.'¹² And there is the same teaching in St. Matthew, in the place where he records our Lord's exultation of spirit on the rejection of the wise and prudent and the revelation of the Divine truth to little ones. 'No one knoweth the Son but the Father, neither doth any one know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him.'¹³ And these words are a kind of commentary on the passage before us, for they show the Father leading people to the knowledge of the Incarnate Son, and the Son in turn revealing the Father to those whom He chooses so to enlighten, His choice being decided by their own fitness to receive light, and their readiness to correspond to it when received.

¹¹ St. John iii. 13.¹² St. John i. 18.¹³ St. Matt. xi. 27.

CHAPTER XI.

The Blessed Eucharist.

St. John vi. 47—60; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 74.

It has been said in a former chapter of the present volume, that when our Lord urged on His Apostles the precept of hiding nothing that had been committed to them, of speaking in the light what He had told them in the dark, and of preaching on the housetops what they had heard in the ear, He must have had in His mind the immense stores of Christian truth which were to be entrusted to them, and the necessity of declaring to the world these saving truths, even when the world might not be inclined to listen to them. If we were to seek in the Life of our Lord Himself for occasions on which He may seem to have acted on this principle, to have forced on unwilling and uncongenial hearers some of the most sublime and difficult of Christian doctrines, we might probably fix on the present as on one at least of such occasions. It is plain from the onward progress of the discourse which St. John is here reporting for us, that the assembly in the synagogue of Capharnaum, to whom it was delivered, contained many who were not ready to receive the great doctrine which it was our Lord's desire to propose. If there were some there who were well inclined, the majority was altogether indisposed to receive these truths. We are told at the end of this account by St. John, that many of our Lord's own disciples fell away from Him

after this discourse, and the reason assigned is the hardness of the doctrine which it contained.

All this must have been perfectly obvious to our Lord. He must have counted the cost, so to say, and must have determined that it was more for the glory of the Father and for the good of the Church that these truths should be vigorously insisted on, at this moment, after the first great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, than that He should leave the doctrine for a future time, or perhaps remain altogether silent concerning it. This was not in the counsels of God. Our Lord was now within little more than a year of His Sacred Passion, and, within a few weeks of that sacrifice of Himself, the Church was to be in full life in Jerusalem, and rapidly spreading over the cities and towns of the Holy Land. Everywhere there was to be the Christian flock gathered round the Christian altar, the continual Sacrifice of the New Law was to be daily offered, and that wonderful sacramental life of our Lord among us, and of devout souls living by Him, and abiding in Him, and He in them, was to have begun, never to end as long as the world lasts. For this it was no doubt necessary, or at least convenient, that the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist should have been already well founded in the hearts and minds of the Apostles and of the faithful. This was a practical treasure which could not wait for gradual and cautious development. It was to be the very life of the Church from the beginning. And so our Lord on this occasion braved, so to say, the storm of criticism and cavil, and the more painful separation, which He knew to be inevitable, from many who had up to this point followed Him. For general interests and the good of the whole body of the Church have often to take precedence of the considerations of what may seem prudent, and our Lord's time, as has been

said, was very short. He had worked the miracle for the purpose of the revelation of the doctrine, and it would not have been in accordance with His wisdom to postpone the teaching, in such a way as to let the impression of the miracle which was so closely connected with it, die away. The whole doctrine could not as yet be set forth, but that part of it which was most closely represented by the miracle must follow on that representation, even though timid considerations of prudence might have seemed to counsel its postponement.

Thus we find Him, in the sequel of this discourse, insisting just on those very points which had been made stumbling blocks and matters of objection. He has warned the people, in the words of which we have last had to speak, against the great danger which they incurred of being wilfully deaf to the teaching of the Father. After this, He proceeds at once to repeat and insist on what He had said before, only making it more full and explicit. He begins with that form of asseveration which He seems to have especially used when He was laying down truths on His own authority. ‘Amen, amen, I say unto you, he that believeth in Me hath everlasting life. I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat It, he may not die. I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever.’ Each one of these sentences repeats an assertion already made. And then He added another short sentence, which must have sounded a thousand times more difficult to them than anything that He had hitherto uttered. ‘And the Bread which I will give, is My Flesh for the life of the world.’ He resumes and urges still more forcibly what He had already said, and He adds this new truth, which was

in itself so startling. He had said that he that came to Him should not hunger, and that he that believed on Him should never thirst. That is as much as to say that faith is the condition on which eternal life is given, for never to hunger or never to thirst is to be independent of the needs in consequence of which men die. Again He had said that it was the will of the Father, that every one who saw the Son and believed in Him should have life everlasting. He had not said what it was that they must receive in order not to hunger or to thirst, what it was that they must have imparted to them as the principle of everlasting life. But He begins by the re-assertion of this truth. 'He that believeth in Me hath everlasting life.'

He had urged them to labour for the meat or food which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man would give them. He had said that the Father gave them the true Bread from Heaven, the Bread of God which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world, and that He was the Bread of Life. This again He now repeats, 'I am the Bread of Life.' They had told Him that their fathers had eaten manna in the desert, and He had said that was not the true bread from Heaven. Now He takes up this remark again, and enforces the inferiority of the manna, by the truth that it did not give perpetual life. This again He insists on: 'Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead.' The effect of that heavenly food, if you call it so, passed away with the occasion, like that of the daily bread on which your earthly life is supported. It lasts for the day, and then its effects are over. It is not so with the true Bread from Heaven. 'This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven,' not the sky above your head, but the Heaven where God dwells, 'that if any man eat of It, he may not die.'

He had said that He was the Bread of Life, and they had caught up His words to found on them their objection about the son of Joseph. They murmured because He said, 'I am the Living Bread that came down from Heaven.' And now He calmly repeats the very statement to which they objected, 'I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven.'

And whereas before He had only said, that every one who saw the Son and believed on Him should have everlasting life, and He would raise him up at the last day, now He makes the statement more precise and more startling, by connecting this everlasting life with the eating of this Heavenly Bread. 'If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever.' And lastly, as has been said, to add still more clearness and precision to the astonishing truth at which He had before but hinted obscurely, He adds, 'And the Bread which I will give, that of which I spoke when I bade you labour for the Food which endureth unto eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, the Bread which I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world.' Every single sentence in this statement by our Lord insists on and makes more definite what He had said before, and what they had taken up as a matter of scandal, or at least of difficulty. And the final statement, about giving His Flesh as Bread, and for the life of the world, was something altogether unheard of up to the moment when the words were spoken. Thus it is clear how unflinchingly, so to speak, our Lord insists upon the promulgation of this great truth.

It is now time to go through these several statements of our Blessed Lord, one by one, and to trace the gradual growth of the doctrine as He sets it forth in them. He begins by the general statement as to the condition of everlasting life. This condition is faith in

Him. Faith in Him implies the acceptance of Him as the Messenger of God, and of all the claims that He makes as such, and of all the truths which He teaches as such. It implies faith in Him as the Incarnate Son of God, as the Revealer of the Father, as the Teacher of Mankind, as the Prophet promised by Moses, the Saviour, the Redeemer of the world, the Son of David, the Eternal Truth. But a condition is not a means, and faith is a condition. It may, indeed, be more than a condition, because of the marvellous dispositions and fruits which it produces in the soul, but it is not an instrumental cause, as food is the cause of strength, and as the sacraments are the causes of the graces which belong to them. Thus faith gives the title and right to eternal life, and disposes the soul for it, and when it is said that he that believes in our Lord has everlasting life, this is what is meant. It is not meant that there are no necessary means ordained by God whereby the frail children of Adam are to be made the possessors of eternal life, as well as its heirs. What, then, are the means whereby everlasting life is conferred and conveyed and secured? This question our Lord next answers. He says, 'I am the Bread of Life.' Bread is a means of life. Life of the body is supported by food, and in the same way the life of the soul and spirit is to be supported by its own food. The life of the body of man, and the life of the spirit of man, are analogous in this. Each requires support from without for its sustenance. Neither in body nor in soul, neither naturally nor supernaturally, can man live by an intrinsic inherent independent life of his own. So the everlasting life of which our Lord speaks must have its appointed support and food, and Who can this Food be but the Incarnate Son of God, Who is the Life and the Light of men? So He declares Himself to be the Bread of Life, as He afterwards says that He is

the Living Bread. He is Bread from Heaven, the Bread of Life, the Living Bread. The title of Bread implies that He is the food and support of the life of which He is speaking. When He says that He is the Bread of Life, He signifies that He has the power of conferring life on others. When He says that He is the Living Bread, He implies that He has life inherent in Himself, and that what He imparts to others is a participation of what is His own.

If our Lord had gone no further than this, we might perhaps have learnt that, in some wonderful and undefined way, the Incarnate Son of God is the support of the spiritual and eternal life of which He is speaking. He might be this, conceivably, by some effluence of life from Him, reaching the soul of man in some simply spiritual way, as when it is said that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. But our Lord means more than this. Up to this time He had spoken of the Bread of Life, but He had not spoken of the eating of the Bread of Life. He had seemed to avoid this expression, for more than once it would have been natural for us to expect it, if He had meant to use it. He had seemed to be on the point of using it when He had said, 'I am the Bread of Life,' and gone on to say that men should never hunger and never thirst because of Him. But He had not then used the expression. He had said, on the other hand, 'He that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.' Again, He had spoken of everlasting life as His gift, but then He had said that it was the will of His Father that everyone who seeth the Son and believeth in Him, should have everlasting life, and be raised up at the last day. Here it might appear that, if eating or drinking had any part in the securing of everlasting life, it might

have been mentioned. But our Lord proceeds with the utmost deliberation and tenderness in the promulgation of this great and difficult truth. He had paused, on that occasion, to speak of the spiritual miseries which caused them to murmur at Him, the absence of disposition on which the Father might work in leading them to Him. Now, however, He goes a step beyond what He had said before. He had already said that there was a Bread of Life which came down from Heaven, and He had already said that those who believed in Him were to have everlasting life. Now He unites these two statements by connecting everlasting life with the eating of the Bread of Life, and He uses their assertion about their fathers in the desert by way of contrast, to enhance the dignity and power of this Heavenly Bread, the true Manna. 'Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the true Bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of It, he may not die.'

Here, then, everlasting life is directly connected with the eating of the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, and, as He has already said that He is the Bread which cometh, or which hath come, down from Heaven, He has laid the foundation for the further truth, that He It is Who is to be eaten in order that men may live for ever. And then, that there may be no mistake as to this inference, He adds the statement categorically, 'I am the Living Bread that came down from Heaven.' But, O Lord, they might have said, how is it that Thou art to be our Bread? He first of all asserts the truth, and then He adds the manner and the means. 'I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, He shall live for ever.' And then He goes back to the statement which He had made at the very beginning of the discourse, where He had told

them to labour for the Food which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give them. He it was Who had given them the bread miraculously multiplied on which they had lately fed, for the sake of which they would have been ready to become His followers. But He had far better Bread than that to give them. This statement He now repeats and insists on. 'If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever, and the Bread which I will give, is My Flesh for the life of the world.'

In these last words, then, we find the full completion of the chain of truths as to everlasting life. The title and right to it belong to faith in Him. It is dependent on the reception of Bread, as the material life of man is dependent on its own bread. This Bread is Himself, in that in Him is the spiritual life of man and the means and power for its support, even throughout eternity. The Bread of Life has come down from Heaven, and if any man eat of It he shall live for ever. He will give Himself as Bread, He will give the Bread which is His Flesh, for the life of the world. The Greek text has a few more words, which only explain the meaning further. The Bread which I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the world. The words 'My Flesh for the life of the world' might be understood that His Flesh was given simply as food for the life of the world. The words added in the other text, help us to understand that the Flesh of our Lord, His whole Body and Life, are given for the life of the world as its redemption, as the atonement and the sacrifice to the justice of God for the sins of the world, as its reconciliation to the Father, before they are given as food for the soul to secure to it everlasting life. These two senses are combined in the shorter form of words, and they are set forth more fully in the longer form.

There can be no doubt as to the meaning of these words, if we are to take as our guide to their meaning, the interpretation put on them by those who heard them. For the Evangelist goes on at once to tell us that the Jews strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat? and that our Lord did not in any way proceed to qualify their interpretation. They took the words literally, and He did not rebuke them for so doing, or add any explaining clause to soften the meaning which they had attached to them. We shall see what He says in this way, presently. The passage contains several points which require elucidation, and we may speak of these in the first place.

Something has already been said of the relation of faith in the Son of Man to everlasting life. Here it may be added, that the final words of the passage, in which everlasting life is attributed to the eating of the Flesh of the Son of Man, do not practically go beyond what is included in the first simple statement about faith, as the condition of everlasting life. For faith in our Lord means faith in all His teaching, and it cannot therefore be said that any one who would refuse to believe His teaching concerning the Bread of Life and the Flesh of our Lord given for the life of the world, can be said to believe in Him, and so have everlasting life. Nor can there be any higher or more practical exercise of faith in Him and in His words, than the devout reception of His Flesh and Blood in Holy Communion.

Another difficulty is contained in the words in which our Lord expresses the contrast on which He insists between the manna and the true Bread of Life. His words are very short and pregnant, and must be understood with reference to other truths which do not lie on the surface of the context. Thus He says, that their fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead, but

that there is the Bread coming down from Heaven, and that if any one eat of It he may not die. It might be expected from this contrast, so shortly put in these words, that the eater of the true Bread from Heaven would not die, in the same sense and by the same death as those who had eaten the manna. Yet it is a matter of experience that the eaters of this Divine Food do die, as the eaters of the manna died. What, then, is the difference between these two foods? The answer to this is here conveyed in our Lord's own words, for, though He does not explain Himself fully on this point, He more than once introduces the words, 'I will raise him up at the last day.' By this He lets us see that the Bread from Heaven is not meant to secure men from the temporal death which is the common lot of all those who inherit the stain of original sin, but that its work is to be done afterwards, by raising men to new and everlasting life.

These words of our Lord do, in truth, sufficiently contain for us the answer to the apparent difficulty. For they show us that the Bread of which He speaks is not meant to nourish this mortal and temporal life, which was sustained by the successive feeding, day after day, on the manna in the desert, as it would have been sustained by other food of the same kind if the Israelites had been living in the land of promise, instead of in the inhospitable desert. The life which is the gift of the Living Bread which cometh down from Heaven, is the everlasting life to which men are to be raised up at the last day by the power of our Lord. This life will be the fruit and work of the Living Bread which they have received during their temporal life. Thus the contrast between the two breads is complete and full. For the manna did not preserve the eaters thereof from death, nor had it the power of raising them up again after death. But

the true Bread of Life is the principle and source of the resurrection, and It will preserve for ever from all death those who inherit the new and everlasting life which is conferred on them by Its virtue. The manna supported life for a short time, and did not secure its permanence. The Bread of Life is the cause of the resurrection to the new and everlasting life of which It is the food, and which is never to cease in those who are made partakers of It.

Another matter which may seem to require explanation is the repetition by our Lord of the assertion that He has come down from Heaven, that He is the Bread that came down from Heaven, that it is His Father Who gives them the true Bread from Heaven. What is the connection between this truth, and the power which He claims for the Bread which is Himself, of giving eternal life to those who are to be made partakers of this Bread? The truth of the Incarnation is the foundation of all these statements, and when our Lord so often says that He has come down from Heaven, He means to insist, as it seems, on the truth that He is the Son of God, consubstantial with the Father, and receiving from Him the whole Divine Nature and Essence, and that consequently His Sacred Humanity is the fountain of all life to the world. If He had not come down from Heaven, that is, if He had not been the Incarnate Son of God, He could not have been the Life of the world. The life that He lives is derived from His Father, as He says presently, that the living Father hath sent Him, and He lives by the Father. This life can be no other than the Divine and heavenly life which the Father Himself lives, and which is eternal. If our Lord is not only the Son of Man Who hath come from Heaven, but the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven, He must not only have the power of giving life, but He must actually

give it, He must feed those who eat of Him. If He is the Living Bread, by which we understand that He has Life in Himself to communicate to others, then He must give the life by which He lives to those who feed on Him, according to their capacity of sharing it. But He can give no less than the life which He has Himself and by which He lives. Therefore the life which He imparts is heavenly and everlasting. He has brought with Him from Heaven, and given to men, this everlasting life, because He has made Himself the Food of those who believe in Him, and He imparts it to them when they feed upon Him.

Again, it has been remarked that our Lord speaks somewhat shortly and veiledly of the sacrifice which He was to consummate on the Cross, when He says that the Bread which He will give is His Flesh for the life of the world, or His Flesh which He will give for the life of the world. For it must be remembered that this also was a mystery of which He had not yet spoken openly even to the disciples, because, as we may think, their faith in His Divinity was not yet perfectly ripe for this disclosure. He did not begin to speak of the Passion for some little time after this. Therefore it is not to be wondered at if, in this place, He does not draw out this doctrine, if He prefers to leave even the doctrine on which He is insisting, that of the Blessed Eucharist, without the additional light which it would derive from the promulgation of the truth concerning His Passion. This must have enhanced the difficulty of the reception of this doctrine by the audience, for it is obvious that the gift of the Blessed Eucharist is much more intelligible and free from the liability to carnal interpretation, if the Sacrifice of the Cross be presupposed. It was presupposed in His own mind as He spoke these words, it is present to our minds as we read

the words now. But it was a hidden mystery to those present in that synagogue.

And, accordingly, we find that the audience passes over the allusion to the Passion without notice, grounding their objection to the last words of our Lord simply on the statement that He was to give His Flesh as the Bread of Life. They knew nothing as yet, then, of the Sacrifice of the Cross, and nothing is as yet said about the mystery of Transubstantiation. The doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist is set before them without the aid of the light thrown upon it by these two great portions of the truth, as also without that of the immense light contained in the mystery of His Ascension and Glorified Life, to which He alludes after the close of the discourse. Yet, without all this to help them, the doctrine here set forth is urged on them, as we shall see, with the greatest earnestness by our Lord as a thing that they must believe on His word. Thus we have a fresh proof of the immense importance of this doctrine in the eyes of our Lord. Although it was necessary for Him to keep back some part of the whole truth concerning it, which might even make it more easy of acceptance by those to whom He was speaking, still He would not delay presenting it to them as far as was then possible to Him. Moreover, the words, 'which I will give for the life of the world,' may be and have been understood as containing a reference to the Blessed Eucharist Itself as well as to the Passion. For it is in the Holy Eucharist that our Lord, day after day, offers Himself in the Holy Sacrifice for the salvation of the world, and it was right that in this preliminary statement concerning this great doctrine, no part thereof should be entirely omitted. Thus His words include the giving of the Flesh and Blood of our Lord on the Cross for the life of the world, the giving of the same Flesh and Blood in the Adorable

Sacrifice of the Altar for the same end, and the giving of His Precious Body and Blood in Holy Communion to be the life of all that receive them.

It is quite certain that our Lord did not in any way modify or explain away His words, notwithstanding the objections of His hearers on this occasion. On the contrary, He insisted on the truth which He had declared by repeating it in every possible form and with all possible earnestness. 'The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, Amen, Amen I say unto you,' beginning thus with the customary formula with which He was wont to preface His most dogmatic utterances, 'Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you.' Here is an exclusive and negative statement, covering therefore the whole subject, and leaving no loophole, so to say, for evasion of the truth. Our Lord not only reasserts what has been questioned, but He makes the necessity of the eating and drinking of His Blood universal and absolute, in the sense in which this is true. But He had said nothing before of this necessity. Then He repeats the same statement affirmatively, 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' Thus He attributes to the eating and drinking of which He speaks the same results of which He had before spoken, as being the will of His Father for those who come to Him and believe in Him. Thirdly, He asserts earnestly the lifegiving qualities of His Flesh and of His Blood—'For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.' Thus the lifegiving power of His Flesh and Blood is asserted as intrinsically belonging to them. They are the means of life, not simply conditions on which Life will be given. Then He goes on

to speak of the fruit of eating and drinking His Flesh and His Blood, as the most intimate conjunction between Himself and the recipient: 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him.' Then He compares this union between Himself and the recipient to the union between Himself and His Father, which is the cause and principle of His life, implying that, in the same way, the reception of His Body and Blood is to be the cause of life to the recipient. 'As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me.' Finally He sums up the whole doctrine once more in words which He has before used, and on which He again insists, 'This is the Bread that came down from Heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.' Thus St. John sums up and concludes this great teaching of our Lord, 'These things He said teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum.'

Let us now see how we are to understand the single statements which our Lord here makes concerning His Body and Blood. In the first place, then, He tells us that, unless we eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, we shall not have life in us. The sentence in our Lord's mouth is clearly meant to insist just on the truth which was the subject of cavil and difficulty to the audience, who had said, 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' Our Lord takes up their words, and asserts in the most positive manner that what they object to as impossible must be done, if they are to have life in them. But He makes a change in the words which they use, for He not only insists on the eating of His Flesh but also on the drinking of His Blood, adding thereby a new difficulty to that which they had already proposed among themselves, as if He had said, 'You must not only eat

My Flesh, you must also drink My Blood.' The right interpretation of this addition seems to be, that our Lord is here carrying on the thought of His Passion which He had already touched upon in His last words, when He had said, 'The Bread which I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world.' We have seen in this a reference to His Sacred Passion. The gift of the Blessed Eucharist grows out of, and is an application of, the fruits of the Sacred Passion, and so, in our Lord's mind, the two are inseparable. The thought of the Sacred Passion immediately suggests that, not only of the Body which hung on the Cross, but of the Blood which was poured out of those sacred veins for the redemption of the world. Throughout the whole of Scripture and prophecy the redemption of man had been connected with the shedding of this Precious Blood. Thus, as the Holy Eucharist is the banquet, so to say, on the sacrifice of His Body made on the Cross, so also is it the banquet on the Precious Blood which was shed on the Cross, when the Body of our Lord was there lifted up in sacrifice for the life of the world. The words are equivalent to these, Unless you partake of Me, Who am about to shed My Blood for you and to give My Body for you in My death, you shall not have life in you, for the life of which I speak is to be communicated to you by the partaking of the sacrifice of My Passion, in that holy banquet in which it is repeated and applied.

Another reason given for these words is that our Lord wished also to insist on the necessity of so communicating as to commemorate and feed in faith on His Sacred Passion. For it is conceivable that we might have been made partakers in some wonderful way of the Flesh and Blood of our Lord so as not to commemorate His Passion. This is not the design of God. But if we are to communicate so as to make commemo-

ration of the Adorable Sacrifice on the Cross, then there can be no better way of making such a commemoration than the receiving Him in some way which represents that separation of His Flesh from His Blood which was to take place in His Passion. It is not simply our Lord's Flesh that is to be our Food, but our Lord's Flesh in such a way as will remind us and make it easy for us to dwell on the thought of His Passion for us. And lastly, the twofold expression of eating and drinking expresses more completely than that of simple eating, the perfect refectio and feeding of the soul. So our Lord, in the Sermon on the Mount, speaks of 'hungering and thirsting' after justice, instead of simply hungering or thirsting, in order to express the most perfect and eager longing of which man is capable.

These reasons are sufficient for the explanation of the double sentence which our Lord uses in this place, which is, as has been said, an addition of His own to the sentence of the people whom He was correcting and teaching authoritatively. We shall see the force of this explanation, if we suppose our Lord to have left out, in the remainder of His discourse, all mention of His Precious Blood, and of our drinking It in the Holy Eucharist. It is not impossible, as we see in the Fourth Book of the *Following of Christ*, to speak adequately and devoutly of Holy Communion without always naming the Precious Blood as well as our Lord's Body. But if this had been left out, something would have been wanting for the foundation, in these words of His, of all that immense fabric, so to say, of Christian devotion in the Blessed Eucharist which rests on the intimate connection between that great mystery and the Sacred Passion itself. At the same time we can see how careful our Lord was not to go beyond the foundation in this case. The people to whom He

spoke, and indeed His own nearest disciples, were as yet altogether, or in great part, ignorant of the mystery of the Passion. It was necessary that the connection should be established in our Lord's own words. But it was necessary that it should be established, for the present, in an enigmatical way, such as would become clear enough to the faithful when the whole truth of the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist came to be taught, but not before.

The mystery which is now veiled became manifest at the Last Supper, when He gave to the Apostles His Body and His Blood separately, under the forms of bread and wine, using words which spoke of His Body being given for them and His Blood being shed for many for the remission of sins. And even now these words were full of the deepest meaning to our Lord Himself, and they set before the Sacred Heart a picture on which He would delight to dwell. To the faithful their meaning would come out, in proportion as the doctrine was revealed and understood by them, more to one and less to another, and their meaning is so full and large that the contemplations of all the saints throughout all the generations of the Church have not sufficed to exhaust them, or to make them seem old and worn out.

Our Lord must have been aware that His words would not only feed the devout and loving hearts of His chosen saints throughout all the ages of the Church, but that also they would be laid hold of by heretics, for the purpose of blaming the Church in her careful provision for due reverence to His Precious Body and Blood in the Adorable Sacrament. For the words, as they stand, seem at first sight to enjoin on all who are to have life in them the reception of His Flesh as their food and of His Blood as their drink. This is true, if rightly under-

stood. But it is not true, as the same cavillers go on to object, that these words enjoin the reception of the Body and Blood of our Lord by all under the separate species of the bread and wine, as if there was to be no life in any who did not receive in both kinds this Blessed Sacrament. This objection itself is of the more force in many parts of Christendom, because in so many of the sects which have sprung from the revolt of Luther and others at the time of the so-called Reformation, the whole idea of the Sacrifice of the Altar is entirely wanting. One of the very chief reasons why the Body and Blood of our Lord are there offered under two different species, lies in the necessity of the most perfect possible representation, in the Sacrifice of the Church, of the Sacrifice of the Cross, in which the Body of our Lord was entirely emptied of the Precious Blood. And one of the chief reasons why heretics are led to make this objection is exactly because they do not consider the Holy Eucharist as a true and proper Sacrifice.

Our Lord could foresee all these troubles and cavils, and yet He used the words of which we are speaking for the purpose of insisting on the devout commemoration of His Passion. Of course the objections of the heretics and others of whom we speak are founded on the apparent insistence of our Lord both on the eating and on the drinking, and, as they would argue, separately. But in the first place, the words do not of necessity mean what the adversaries of the Church would make them mean. There are many places in Holy Scripture in which the particle 'and' is used disjunctively, in the same sense as the particle 'or.' Again, throughout this passage our Lord constantly insists on the eating of His Flesh without any mention of the drinking of His Blood. Thus there are two arguments whereby the true sense of the passage is defended. The first is drawn from the usage

of Scripture, which tends to show that our Lord did not mean to insist on the separate and twofold reception of His Body and Blood. The other is taken from the manner of His speaking in this very context, which shows that all the time that He was speaking of the Bread from Heaven, and of the everlasting life and raising up at the last day, which were to be dependent on it, He uses only a single word, and not two, to express what is necessary. He speaks of eating, not of drinking. But the best of arguments against the objection in question is the practice of the Catholic Church in all ages, which has sanctioned the reception of the Holy Communion under one kind, by all except the Priest who offers the Adorable Sacrifice. This practice has never been universal, and not always uniform. If it had been so, it would be an argument that there was something wrong or blameable about double reception. This is not the case. The practice of Communion under one kind is a pure matter of discipline, and it has prevailed so universally as it has in the modern Churches out of reasons of reverence.

Nor of reverence alone. For it would be practically impossible in many places, considering the great frequency of Holy Communion, for all the people to receive in both kinds, and if this could be done, it would inevitably lead to many inconveniences and accidents painful to the devout heart. At the same time, it would not be easy to communicate the sick in both kinds, nor would all that tender consideration for her children on the part of the Church have been possible, by which they were allowed to keep the Blessed Sacrament in their houses for private Communion in times of persecution and the like, and also to take It with them on their journeys. Moreover, the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament might have suffered, if there had not been this provision, from which it was evident practically, and to the cognizance of all,

that the Body and Blood of our Lord are received, and are eaten and drunk, adequately and perfectly, under one kind. This doctrine is as important as the other concerning the Adorable Sacrifice, that the Sacrifice is not perfected except by the separate consecration and consuming of the two species, by which is represented the separation of the Body and Blood of our Lord which took place on the Cross, and thus the death of our Lord is mystically renewed.

Thus, when the whole question is fairly considered, we can see that the practice of the Catholic Church, in respect of this matter of discipline, is not only justified, but full of the utmost tenderness. She acts not only within her rights, she acts with the greatest consideration for the good of her children. She preserves for them the true doctrine by a practical observance, of which no one can be ignorant, and she makes Holy Communion possible to large classes of her children who might not otherwise be able to enjoy this blessed privilege. She makes it easy, under circumstances when it would otherwise be most difficult. Her discipline in this respect may be compared to her rule in other respects, namely, the rule whereby it is made possible for the faithful to receive Holy Communion at other times than the time of the celebration of Mass. This privilege has been taken away from them by heretics, as well as that of receiving Communion under one kind. The heretical practice is founded on the heretical doctrine in the one case as in the other. The heretical doctrine, in each case, can support itself by apparent arguments based on an appeal to Scripture or to tradition, without the interpretation of the Church. And, in each case, the heretical discipline is hard, uncompassionate, strict in the sense of making difficulties where God has not made them, and it results practically in a very frequent denial of

Holy Communion to those who might receive it if they lived under the laws of the Church.

Another difficulty belonging to this passage may be shortly noticed, that namely which refers to the case of children. Is it necessary for them to receive the Blessed Sacrament in order that they may have life in them? It is well known that in the earliest ages of the Church children were not only confirmed immediately after Baptism, but also made to receive Holy Communion under the species of wine. This was done from a right sense that they were included in the general law here announced by our Lord, and that, in some sense or other, it was necessary for them to eat and drink the Body and the Blood of our Lord. This practice of the early Church is a witness against the error of which we had last to speak, for it shows that Communion was properly administered under one kind from the very beginning. But the Fathers further teach that it is not necessary that the children should actually receive the Blessed Sacrament in the same way as adults. For Communion, at least for full decency and reverence, requires the use of reason, the knowledge of what is received, the preparation of the conscience as enjoined by St. Paul, and the like. It is therefore enough for the fulfilment of this precept in the case of children that they should in some way or other be partakers of the Blessed Sacrament. This they are by virtue of their Baptism, for Baptism is the gate, as it is called, to the other sacraments, and by it the children are made members of the mystical Body of Christ, and so of the unity which is represented by the Blessed Sacrament. Thus by virtue of their Baptism they receive our Lord in Holy Communion in the way proportioned to their age and condition, for they receive the right and title to receive It when they are fit for It, and in the meantime they are members of the unity

which is formed and held together and represented by the Blessed Sacrament, as St. Paul says, 'We being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one Bread.'¹

Thus the Church might at one time allow of infant Communion, and at another disuse it, because it is not necessary for children as a means of salvation, and its use or disuse is thus brought within the range of the prudence of the Church. In this case also we may see great reason for thankfulness that the rule of the Church is what it is. If the Communion of children were insisted on, it would imply that it was necessary for salvation, and in that case an additional sacrament of that highest necessity would have been established, a sacrament which cannot always be obtained, even by adults, who can supply, by their intention and desire, the defect of actual reception. But infants and children not yet old enough for Communion, according to the present discipline, cannot thus supply the deficiency, and thus they would be constantly liable to a forfeiture of the right to Heaven which they have received in their baptism, in consequence of circumstances altogether beyond their own will. There are millions on millions of baptized children in Heaven who have never had an opportunity of Holy Communion, and all these could not be there if it were true that these words of our Lord imply the same kind of universal precept as those in which Baptism is enjoined.

After having laid down the necessity of this eating His Body and drinking His Blood in the strongest words, by the negative statement that unless this was done they would have no life in them, our Lord goes on to assert the same truth positively, and to attach to the eating and drinking of which we are speaking the same promises and blessings of which He had before said something,

¹ 1 Cor. x. 17.

when He was speaking of the Bread of Life and of the will of His Father for the benefit of those who saw the Son and believed in Him. ‘He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.’ The two things are conjoined for the more perfect explanation of the truth. The everlasting life, which is the gift conferred on those who eat and drink as our Lord says, is their possession now in hope and title, and, after they have paid the common debt of death, the obligation of which is to remain on all the children of Adam as long as the world lasts, they will be raised up at the last day by the virtue of the Blessed Eucharist and by the power of our Lord.

It is also to be noticed, that we have in these words an advance, so to say, on the gift of which our Lord had spoken before, in the former sentence. In that sentence He had said that unless men ate and drank the Body and the Blood of the Son of Man, they would not have life in them. The life which is conferred by the Blessed Eucharist in our present condition is the life of grace, the spiritual life, and what He had said before, therefore, was, that the appointed means for the preservation of this life in us is the Blessed Eucharist. But now He goes further, and speaks of the everlasting life of soul and body, and of the resuscitation at the last day of those who duly receive Holy Communion here and now. These He attributes to this Divine Food, the reception of which does not simply confer a claim to everlasting life, such, for instance, as is conferred by good works and acts of virtue, which may merit eternal glory, but is in a true way the seed and principle of resurrection and of immortality, because it conjoins us to the Flesh and Blood and whole Person of our Lord, Who lives by the Divine Nature communicated to Him by the Father, and is also the principle and source of

life, spiritual and eternal, to us, who receive Him as our Food.

The true and full idea of food is that it should sustain and preserve life, and it is but an imperfection and failure in its efficacy, that its life-giving properties fade away and come to nothing after a time. The true Food is that, as our Lord said at the beginning of this discourse, which does not perish, but endureth unto life everlasting. This is the kind of food of which He had spoken when He said, a little later on, that His Father gave them the true Bread from Heaven. And now He goes on to declare that His Flesh and Blood are food of this kind. 'For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.' These words assign the reason for the preceding. My Flesh and My Blood duly received, here and now, will secure this everlasting life and this raising up at the last day, because My Flesh and Blood have indeed the full power and efficacy of meat and drink. It is no parable, no riddle, no figure. The Divine power gives to My Flesh and Blood the properties of food, and makes them able to support unto everlasting life, and to raise up the dead. They are as truly food as the life everlasting is true life, and the resurrection thereto a true and perfect and lasting resurrection. The effect corresponds to the cause and the cause to the effect.

Our Lord then goes on to add the manner by which this result of the eating and drinking Him is produced. 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him.' Where our Lord is, there is the fountain and source of everlasting life, there is the power and principle of all resurrection and elevation. The eating and drinking His Body and His Blood produce the effect of union between Him and the recipient of this great blessing. In the case of

ordinary food, there is a union of the substance of the food with that of the recipient, for the food, or part of it, passes into the system and contributes in various ways to the support and refreshment and repairing of that system. Then it passes away, it no longer exists or lives, even with the life which it might have had before, it ceases to be, and its effects pass away also in due time. Very different are the measure and the way of the union between our Lord and the devout communicant. By the reception of the Body and Blood of our Lord the recipient becomes united, not simply to His Flesh and Blood, because His Flesh and Blood cannot be disunited from His Soul or from His Divine Person. He is living and entire in every particle, and the union is between the whole living Christ and the person who receives Him. He Who is thus received does not die or pass, but abides as a principle of life in the communicant. And it is not only that He is received and remains, but it is rather that the communicant enters into Him, and abides in Him in the first instance, and has our Lord abiding in him in the second. But in the case of one who abides in our Lord, and our Lord in him, in this manner, there cannot possibly be anything but everlasting life and the power and principle of resurrection in the manner explained.

In this case also there is a wonderful advance in our Lord's description of the blessing of Holy Communion. For we might have spiritual life in us, we might even have the principle of everlasting and glorious life in us, so as to be raised up by our Lord at the last day, we might have the full benefit of His Flesh and of His Blood as true meat and true drink, and yet His beneficence and His magnificent giving of what is His own to us, might not go so far as that priceless union which is described in these last words, in which He declares

that the communicant abides in Him, and has our Lord abiding in himself. There is absolutely no limit to the intimacy, the oneness with our Lord, the transforming and spiritualizing and elevating, we may almost say, the deifying, effects of this conjunction, except that which is involved in the capacity of our nature and our correspondence to so great a grace. This grace contains that perfect penetration of our whole soul and spirit by the Sacred Humanity of our Lord which makes it true to say, what St. Paul said of himself, that he lived, not he, but Christ lived in him. These words contain the principle of that kind of identification in character and spirit and will and work, even in taste, in method, in disposition, in inclination, in way, in manner, with our Lord, which is seen in various degrees and forms in the saints, all of whom have a brotherly likeness to Him discernible in a measure to men and angels, and still more to the eye of God. Nor is this likeness confined to the saints, for its lineaments, though in fainter lines, belong to the universal Christian character. It is this union with Him which gives its beauty, its power, its marvellous ease and efficacy, its graciousness, its winning sweetness, its dignity, its majesty, to the life which the saints live for God. They are a reflection in His sight of the Son of His Love, in Whom He is well pleased, and they work for His glory in the power and the heavenly devotedness of that Son. It is this that fills their souls with graces which are so perfect in their resemblance to His. All sanctity and perfection have their personal character, as every individual face is itself and no other. And the sanctity of the saints is that personal sanctity of Jesus Christ, and no other, various as they are in their beauties and even in the degrees of their perfection. Thus the fruit of His Presence in them, which springs from the Blessed Eucharist, is not simply

grace and everlasting life, but grace which turns them into images of Him, and life which is in a true sense His Life in them, its energies, its actions, its affections, and its joys are theirs because His, His because theirs. The field of meditation here opened to us is inexhaustible. And then, in the words that follow, our Lord goes on still further, lifting our thoughts to the very sanctuary of the Godhead itself, that they may find there the pattern of our life in union with Him.

‘As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same shall live by Me.’ When our Lord mentions His Mission, He is speaking of His Incarnation, and therefore of His Sacred Humanity. Likewise, when He speaks of what belongs to His Divinity, He attributes what He speaks of to the Father, because He has from the Father His Divine Nature and Essence. Thus both as God and as Man He lives by the Father Who sends Him in His Incarnation, because as God He receives, as has been said, all His being from the Father, and as Man, as a creature, He lives a life dependent entirely on God the Creator. As Man, also, He lives by the life communicated to His Humanity by the union with the Divine Person, and that life is from the Father. As the Son of God He has the same life with the Father, and in His Incarnation He gives, as God, life to His Sacred Humanity. In the same way with the other member of the comparison. In the sense explained, God the Father gives life to the Son, and so our Lord received in Holy Communion imparts life to him who so eats and drinks Him. It is true that the union between the Human and Divine Natures in Christ is an Hypostatic union, and this is not the case with the union between our Lord and the communicant who receives Him. But it is the union, and not the manner

and quality of the union, that is the essential point of the comparison, and the cause of the communication of life from one Person in the union to the other.

The life that is here spoken of as communicated by our Lord to those who eat Him, is the life of grace and the life of glory, which is the crown of the life of grace, and also the everlasting life of which our Lord speaks so often in this discourse, and which is communicated to the body as well as to the soul in the resurrection at the last day. Thus the whole of this argument is concluded, in few words indeed, but words which may feed our contemplations for ever. The assertion of our Lord was that he that eateth His Flesh and drinketh His Blood, hath everlasting life, and that He will raise him up at the last day. The proof of this statement is contained in the assertion that the Body and Blood of our Lord have inherently and essentially this life-giving and resuscitating power. 'For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed.' If so, they can be eaten and drunk, and can produce the effects of food. But the effects which, as such, they produce must be such as naturally belong to the Flesh and Blood which are the Flesh and Blood of a Divine Person. And then, again, our Lord adds further the reason why the reception of His Body and Blood must produce life and resurrection. The proof is contained in the words, 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me and I in him.' It is not, therefore, the flesh and blood as of a victim, or a lifeless Person, that is eaten and drunk. I Myself am present therein, by virtue of the Hypostatic Union, the Divine Person in two Natures, Divine and Human, and so full of life and the source of life. It is union with Myself, and abiding union, which is the result. The recipient lives in Me, and I live in him.

And then, still further, the necessity of this great result is traced up to the union between the Father and the Son in the Divine Nature, which is united in the Humanity of our Lord in the Incarnation. He has been sent on earth by the Father, because He has become Incarnate. He lives by the Father as God, because from Him He receives the one whole Divine Essence. He lives by the Father as Man, because as Man He is a Creature, and all creatures live by God, and His Sacred Humanity lives by virtue of the Hypostatic Union, by the communication of the Divine Nature from the Father to the Son, for He is one Person in two Natures, and that Person a Divine Person. He then it is, thus living by the Father, Who is united to the devout communicant by virtue of the eating and drinking of His Flesh and of His Blood. And thus He becomes to that communicant the principle of the life of grace, and immortality, and glory, as the Father is the principle of life to Him as the Incarnate Son. Here, then, is the whole doctrine summed up by our Lord in these few words.

And then He concludes the whole discourse by a repetition of the assertions which had been called in question, and which He has now so fully explained and set forth. 'This is the Bread, which came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.' It is true that the Bread which is eaten in the sacred banquet of the Eucharist is the Flesh of our Lord's Humanity, which did not descend from Heaven, but was formed in the womb of His Blessed Mother. But it is said to have come down from Heaven, as elsewhere the Son of Man is said to be in Heaven, because it is the Flesh which belongs to the Divine Person of our Lord, Who is always in Heaven, and Who came down

from Heaven when He took a human soul and a human body into union with His Divine Person. For the Body and Soul of our Lord can never be separated from His Divine Person. Where they are, there that Divine Person is. Thus, in the Blessed Sacrament, they constitute the true Bread which came down from Heaven, of which the manna which fell from the skies was the figure, both in that it seemed to come from Heaven, and in that it was given to support life. But it did not support life in the sense of preserving against death, nor had it the power of raising up to new life after death had been undergone. Those who fed on it died, the life which it supported it could not preserve from decay and death. Those who fed on it will never rise again by virtue of it. This is the difference between the manna and the true Bread which it signified, and which is now to be offered to you by the goodness of God, goodness of which you have had an example in your miraculous feeding on the other side of the Lake. The true Bread will give life, support life, preserve life, and, when you have undergone the common sentence of death, it will give you at the last day a life far better, more glorious, and withal everlasting. 'He that eateth of this Bread shall live for ever.'

Having thus gone shortly through the several stages of this great discourse of our Lord, it may be of use to us to survey it again as a whole, in order to gain a clearer view of its relations to the great mystery of our faith of which it speaks. When we consider how very stupendous in itself that mystery is, we shall be better able to appreciate, both the enormous difficulty by which our Lord found Himself confronted when He undertook to force it, so far, on the dull intelligences, the feeble faith, and the perverse wills of His hearers in the synagogue, and also the very great importance which He

must have attached to its promulgation at this particular point of the Ministry on which He was occupied. He was looking far beyond that particular audience, as He must have looked far beyond those happy five thousand men whom He had fed on the mountain-side, when He worked the great miracle, which is in truth a part of the revelation of the mystery of which we are now speaking. It was imperative that the doctrine should be delivered while the impression of this miracle was as yet fresh in the minds of the people.

The mystery of the Blessed Eucharist postulates all the highest and most difficult articles of our faith. It begins with the Consubstantiality of the Eternal Son with His Father. For its effects on us, in this world and in the next, imply that essential and ineffable life, which is the life of the Divine Persons in their possession of the one Godhead. This life was in our Lord in His Sacred Humanity, and it is the foundation in us of the life of grace and of glory. 'In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men.' In the second place, the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist requires the whole doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in which He is the Living Bread that came down from Heaven, of which the manna was a figure. Further, the Holy Eucharist requires the marvellous dispensation of the Passion of the Incarnate Son for the redemption of the world. It is in that mystery that His sacrifice was consummated, the offering of the Flesh which He was to give for the life of the world, of which we are made partakers in Holy Communion. This connection of the Blessed Eucharist with the Passion, is the reason, as we have pointed out, why our Lord, after having first spoken only of the Bread from Heaven and the Living Bread which came down from Heaven, suddenly changes His language at a certain point, when the thought of the

Passion occurs, and insists henceforth in the strongest manner on the eating of the Flesh of the Son of Man and drinking His Blood.

But it is also very plain, that when we have arrived at the Sacred Passion in the series of the mysteries on which the Holy Eucharist is built, we have only begun to touch on the foundation itself of this Divine institution. In order that the Blessed Eucharist might be what It is, it was certainly necessary that the Son of God should become Man, and offer Himself as a sacrifice for mankind on the altar of the Cross. But this is not all that is requisite to make the Blessed Sacrament possible. Day after day, a thousand times over, and in every part of the world, the priests of God take the holy ciborium into their hands, and, after saying a few solemn words, lay on the tongues of the communicants at the altar-rails the consecrated Host, which our faith tells us is the Bread of Life which came down from Heaven, of which our Lord here speaks, the Body and Blood of the Son of Man. That this might be, it was not enough that our Lord should offer Himself on the Cross. His Sacred Body must rise again from the grave, the earnest and principle of the resurrection of all mankind at the last day. This Sacred Body, reunited to His Soul, was to rise, not to the life which He had led among men, a life like ours in its humiliation, in its liability to pain, and weariness, and suffering, and death, but to a new life of glory, which had indeed been always its due, but which had been waived, as it were, that He might suffer for us. After the pause on earth of a short appointed time, it was to be set for ever on the throne of the Majesty on high. This might seem to shut us out for ever from the opportunity of that participation of His Flesh and Blood of which we are told in the discourse before us. But it was not so. The new

condition of being which His Sacred Body then assumed was not opposed to the designs of God in regard to that participation. It was, on the contrary, necessary for carrying out those designs. Thus we find the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord alluded to in the sequel to this very discourse, as furnishing a solution of the gross difficulties which rose in the minds of the listeners in the synagogue. But it is certain that these mysteries, which are always specially commemorated by the Church in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, removed our Lord from the world and from the Church, as to that manner of His Presence as visible and tangible among men, in which He had hitherto lived since His Incarnation. It might have been feared that His session in glory might involve His absence from the earth, if there had not been still further mysteries ready in the previsions of the Divine Wisdom and Mercy. To overcome this obstacle fresh exertions and inventions of His power and love were needed, and were forthcoming.

Day after day, on a thousand altars, the Body thus glorified, the Body raised to Heaven at the Ascension, was to be offered really and substantially in the Adorable Sacrifice of Love, and thus the Passion was to be repeated in that new state of existence of our Lord which began after the Resurrection. It is from this Adorable Sacrifice that was to issue the fulfilment of the marvellous promise made to men in this great discourse. These were, to eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and to drink His Blood, and His Flesh was to be meat indeed, and His Blood drink indeed, meat and drink not of any passing efficacy, but the Food which endureth unto eternal life. The other great words were to have their fulfilment also. Men, by receiving His precious Body and Blood, were to abide in Him and He in them. They were to live by His life, as He

lives by the Father. They were to be raised up by Him at the last day, they were to have the life of grace here and the eternal life of glory hereafter. For the accomplishment of all these promises, as has been said, a further invention of Divine love was required, and was forthcoming. The climax and crown, the last link in this great chain of marvels of condescension and mercy, the device of Love and Wisdom and Power which makes the reception of the consecrated Host by the communicant the partaking of the veritable Body and Blood of Jesus Christ—as truly present there as on the Throne of His Heavenly Glory, and fraught with all these stupendous powers and graces for time and for eternity—was to be the ineffable mystery which the Catholic Church calls by the name against which heretics rail and at which the devils writhe, Transubstantiation.

Now, it is clear that in this discourse, of which we have been speaking, our Lord does not pour out all that He might have said on the subject of these great mysteries. It would evidently have been altogether out of keeping with His usual method, if He had endeavoured to set forth the whole of this great chain of truths in their unveiled simplicity, beauty, and grandeur. Of the greater number of them He had hardly as yet spoken at all, at least to the people. He had to deal with hard hearts, gross minds, carnal spirits, grovelling aims, and desires of earth. He reserved the mention of the Passion itself to a time which had not yet come. Of the Resurrection and Ascension there had hardly yet been a word. All these things must be kept in mind when we come to estimate the position of this discourse in the gradual process of the unfolding of the sacred truths which were to be the life and marrow of the Christian system of doctrine and practice. We are so accustomed to think of our Lord as keeping back His

great secrets, that we are surprised at His occasionally more open way with individual souls, as when He told the Samaritan woman at the well that He was the Messiah, and spoke about Baptism to Nicodemus. But in truth He was always ready and eager to reveal these great truths of faith, and He might have revealed far more, even in this discourse, if He had not been kept back by the difficulty He found in the dulness of men's hearts.

We have an instance at the very outset of the Gospel history, of the manner in which the most stupendous mysteries can be set forth, in their fulness and yet in the fewest words, when there is in the recipient of the revelation perfect humility and docility, and the full illumination of faith. In three sentences Gabriel was able to inform the mind of Mary of the ineffable wonders of the counsel of God, by which she was to become His Mother, the counsel itself, and the manner of its execution. We cannot doubt that our Lord could have communicated to His Blessed Mother, in fewer words than we have taken in our short sketch of these great mysteries, all that He was about to do in this mystery of love, this outpouring of His mercy, in the Blessed Sacrament. Great indeed is the contrast between the dialogue of the Annunciation and the narrative given by St. John of this disputation in the synagogue of Capharnaum, which we may be sure gives us truly the full outline of the discussion, though not perhaps all that was said on that occasion. But in the case of the revelation to Mary, the Divine truths imprinted themselves instantaneously on the mind of the listening Virgin, and her assent followed, as the image in the mirror follows the presence of the face before it, as the shadow on the ground follows the incidence of the rays of the sun on the body which it represents. The one

question which Mary asked was needed, in the designs of God, to bring out both her virginal purpose and the Divine manner in which the Incarnation was to be carried out in her womb. It drew forth the full revelation instead of hindering it. The Incarnation had been prophesied, as Mary knew, and the first part of the message of the Angel declared to her that she was to be the human agent in the execution of the Divine promise. Thus the Angel uses, in that first portion of his message, the words of prophecy about the throne of David, the house of Jacob, and the like. But the manner of the Incarnation had not been spoken of, and it was Mary's work, first to bring out the revelation and then to receive it, in all its magnificent marvellousness, with an act of the most perfect faith. She did not say, 'How can this be?' or 'How shall I know this?' as these people at Capharnaum or as St. Zachary, but 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' And the revelation of the part to be taken by the Holy Ghost and by the Eternal Father was immediately presented to, and at once accepted, by her faith.

We cannot expect to find, in these people in the synagogue, the faith of Mary. But we can see how wonderfully their incredulity contrasts with her faith, and how it must have hindered the revelation of His mysteries which our Lord might otherwise have made, if not in its fulness, for the time was not come for that, at least to a much larger extent than was actually made. They begin, as it seems, with low and worldly views. The impression made on them by the miracle of the loaves is rather the desire to profit by the power thus displayed in the way in which their forefathers had profited by the manna, than the readiness to listen to our Lord in His revelation of the Father. They are thinking of the meat that perisheth. When our Lord

claims their faith, they ask for a sign. They had just seen the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and yet they ask for more to prove to them that He speaks in the name of God. They suggest that what would please them would be a renewal of the daily showers of manna. Then our Lord speaks to them about the true Bread from Heaven, and about Its marvellous effects, which He implies include resurrection and everlasting life. Then they produce their first difficulty. He is Jesus the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother they know, and how can He have come down from Heaven? Again our Lord reasons with them, and warns them of the danger of not listening to the teaching of His Father, and then He urges more plainly and more strongly the truths which He desires them to accept from Him on faith. He that believes in Him has eternal life. In this belief must certainly be included the acceptance of His teaching. 'He is the Bread of Life, which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever, and the Bread that He will give is His Flesh for the life of the world.' This at once produces their second objection. Before it was that He was the Son of Joseph, and so could not have come down from Heaven. Now it is that it is impossible that He can give them His Flesh to eat. They do not ask how it can be, they are certain that it cannot be. And then our Lord, as we have seen, repeats His declaration, first negatively and then affirmatively, and declares that His Flesh is meat and His Blood drink indeed, that he who eats and drinks His Flesh and His Blood abides in Him, and He in him, and that as He has been sent by the Father and lives by His Father, so he that eateth Him shall live by Him.

What is especially notable in this last part of our

Lord's declaration is, that whereas the second head of objections which had been brought by His hearers related, in words at least, to the manner in which the promised mystery might be carried out, He does not say one word about this point, but only repeats His assertion as to the truth which seemed to them impossible. On the other hand, if we turn back in memory to the scene of the Annunciation, we find that our Blessed Lady's question, 'How shall this come to be?' is answered in the fullest manner by the revelation of the whole truth. And it is quite clear that one Divine reason for this difference must have been that our Blessed Lady did not at all question the truth, but only asked, as she was bound, about the manner of the mystery, whereas the people at Capharnaum did not trouble themselves about the manner at all, though their words resemble our Blessed Lady's, to some extent, in outward form. She said, 'How shall this be done?' they say, 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' and the difference between the questions reveals the difference of the dispositions of those who severally asked them. Our Blessed Lady was ready to believe anything about the manner of the mystery which the Angel might say, and the people at Capharnaum had made up their minds that our Lord could say nothing that they could receive as true, because the thing itself was impossible. And we may therefore fairly conclude, that if their question had been simply one as to the manner in which the great marvel of which our Lord spoke was to be brought about, He might have gone on, even to them, to open to some extent the great and vital chain of truths which are now the possession of the faithful children of the Church. We shall perhaps see, in the next chapter, that He did say a few words to His own disciples which tended, at all events, to the

removal of their chief difficulties and the suggestion of some truths which lead to a fuller knowledge of the mystery.

We may add two considerations before we pass on to the sequel of this great discourse. In the first place, the two great revelations which we have been comparing, that of the Incarnation to our Blessed Lady and that of the truth of the Holy Eucharist to this audience at Capharnaum, are alike in one respect. The truth is gradually unfolded in each, and yet the first words in each imply and contain the full development which is afterwards reached. The first words of St. Gabriel to our Blessed Lady are, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women.' It would be to form a very low estimate of the import of these words, to suppose that they did not include in their Divine meaning the truth that the Holy Ghost was with Mary, and would work in her the conception of our Lord, and that she was blessed among women, not in any common sense, in which the words might be true of Jael, or any other valiant woman, raised up by God for a temporal deliverance of the holy people, but in the highest sense which they are capable of bearing, in which they signify the Mother of God Incarnate. The further declarations of the Angel are all within the limits of these first glorious words addressed to Mary, and the full meaning of the first words is but drawn out in the later words.

In the same way, in this discourse, we cannot think that our Lord had any different thought in His mind, when He spoke first of the Meat that endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man was to give, of the Bread that cometh down from Heaven and giveth life to the world, or, later on, of the Bread of which whosoever eateth he shall live for ever, than that which was

in His mind when He spoke of the eating of His Flesh and the drinking of His Blood. It is perfectly true, and most important for the understanding of the discourse, that we should note that He constantly claims their faith, and speaks of faith in Him as the source of everlasting life. But He was, as it were, driven back to assert and reassert His claims on their faith, by the unwillingness which they displayed to receive His teaching, and the faith in Him which it was at that moment all-important for them to have, was the faith in Him, then and there, revealing to them, in some measure and degree, the Divine truth which had been foreshadowed both in the manna and in the multiplication of the loaves.

That miraculous multiplication of the loaves, as has been so often said, is a part of the revelation of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and the whole discourse must be understood with this fundamental rule of its interpretation. It is on account of the relation between the figure and the truth represented—the figure in the miracle and the truth of the refectio of mankind by the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of our Lord—that we have anything in this discourse, even in the earlier parts of it, about eating, or about bread, and the like. It is no doubt possible, after we have the truth of the Blessed Eucharist familiar to us, to speak of spiritually feeding on our Lord in acts of faith and love. But there could be no such language in the Church, if it were not for the real and sacramental feeding on Him to which this discourse refers. Our Lord does not directly mention the eating and drinking of His Body and Blood till the later stage of the disputation is reached. But the prelude to the discourse in the first place, and the last portion of the discourse, in the second place, show what is the true meaning

of the less direct words used in the intermediate passages.

And again, it is quite clear, especially from the last part of the discourse of which we are speaking, that our Lord's intention therein was not so much to explain His doctrine, as to propose it to the faith of His audience, and insist on its reception on the authority of His word. He was addressing Himself to men whom He required to believe Him, however difficult might be the things which He asserted, however slender the arguments by which He supported them, exclusive of the appeal to their faith. He spoke with authority, not with persuasiveness. Now it is not easy to think that He would use this tone with respect to such truths as have in themselves no difficulty at all, such as the figurative and merely spiritual feeding on Him or commemorating His Passion. Nor would it be necessary to work so stupendous a miracle in order to win for Him a ready assent when He spoke of such truths. The discourse is comparatively unintelligible, if He meant by it no more than this.

Our other consideration must be this, that it must not be thought, because our Lord has not drawn out the full and complete doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, and especially of the manner in which it is carried out in the mystery of Transubstantiation, that therefore His words in this discourse are not a sufficient proof of the truth of that very part of the mystery itself. For His silence is only as to the manner in which His Body and Blood become the Food of the devout communicant, and the truth that they do so is independent of the explanation of the manner in which they do so. It is conceivable that Mary might have been made the Mother of God by the operation of the Holy Ghost, without having received any intimation of the manner

in which the great marvel was to be carried out. As far as we are told in the Gospels, the revelation of the manner in which the Body and Blood of our Lord were to become our Food, was made in the simple words used by Him at the Last Supper, when He instituted the Blessed Eucharist saying, 'This is My Body, this is My Blood,' premising in each case the injunction to take and eat, or to take and drink, what He gave them with those words. And it is on these words that we suppose the Apostles to have made their act of faith, if we may so speak, in the truth which we now call Transubstantiation. It is on these words, at least primarily, that Catholic theologians defend the doctrine of the Church. They were prepared by the discourse of which we have been speaking, and by anything else that our Lord may have said to them privately on the subject, of which we have no record, as well as by the few words of explanation of which we shall have to speak in the next chapter, for the great boon of the reception of His Body and His Blood as the food of eternal life, in whatever way or under whatever form that boon might be bestowed. Then, when He gave them the Bread and the Wine on that last solemn occasion, with the words, as we call them, of Institution, their faith was ready to believe that what seemed to them Bread and Wine were His Body and His Blood of which He had before said things so wonderful. It was then, as has been said, that the last link in the chain of Divine truths concerning this mystery of faith was added.

But it remains true, that in the discourse before us, as we have seen, after the strongest expressions of incredulity on the part of the audience, our Lord used the plainest language in reasserting the truth which they declared to be impossible. He declared that unless they ate His Flesh and drank His Blood they should have no life in

them. He declared that to eat His Flesh and to drink His Blood was to have everlasting life. He declared that His Flesh was meat indeed, and His Blood drink indeed. He declared that he that ate His Flesh and drank His Blood, abode in Him and He in him. He declared that as He was sent and lived by the Father, so he that ate Him should live by Him. These declarations assert in the strongest way the reality of the eating and drinking of His Flesh and Blood, under whatever form or shape or appearance they might be presented for eating or drinking. And our Lord would have been most unlike Himself, if He had so spoken after the expressions of incredulity on the part of the people, unless He meant to insist on what they stumbled at, in the meaning in which it was a scandal to them. Now to say this is the same thing as to say, that the later words of our Lord, when He came to institute the Blessed Sacrament, and said that what He gave His Apostles was His Body and His Blood, are to be understood in that full and perfect sense which is required by the repeated declarations made in this closing passage of the discourse before us, and that the declarations in this passage are to be understood in the light of the words used by our Lord at the time of that institution.

CHAPTER XII.

The Scandal of Disciples.

St. John vi. 60—72 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 74.

ST. JOHN sums up his account of the discourse of our Lord concerning the Bread from Heaven by noticing the place in which it was delivered. ‘These things He said, teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum.’ The synagogue in Capharnaum had been built for the Jews by the good and believing Gentile centurion, whose servant our Lord had healed, and to the greatness of whose faith He had Himself borne memorable witness on that occasion. It had been the scene of much of His teaching and of some of His miracles. It was there that He had cast out the devil on the first great Sabbath after the opening of His Public Ministry, when He had also raised the mother of St. Peter’s wife from her bed of sickness, and in the evening, after sunset, had healed as it seems almost the whole number of sick that were brought to Him from the town. It was a place, therefore, of many holy remembrances, a place where many graces had been bestowed. If it were standing now, it would be a holy shrine to all faithful children of the Church, for it was the spot in which He had first publicly spoken of and taught the great doctrine of the Holy Eucharist.

We do not know that after this discourse our Lord ever again taught in that synagogue. If He was not soon to leave even that part of the Holy Land for ever,

at least He was no longer to make it the ordinary scene of His teaching. There is, after this, no record of any discourse that might have been delivered there. It is mournful to think that, on this last occasion of His teaching, the result of His gracious words was to drive away from Him many who had hitherto followed Him. They stumbled, as men are so constantly stumbling, at the greatness of the goodness of God, at the wonders of His magnificence, and of His thoughtful provisions for the benefit of His children. The Capharnaïtes have had thousands of successors in all ages of the Church, men who have made a difficulty of believing that God can be as good to them as He says, who will not believe that He can love them so much and do so much for their love. These stumblers at the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist have had their followers not only in regard of this prime invention and wonder of God's love, but on a score of other points also. The chief reason why men do not accept the infallibility of the Church, or the power of the Mother of God, or the merciful doctrines of Penance or of Indulgences, or the truth of Purgatory, or of the influence of the Saints, and their great glory in Heaven, or the Christian priesthood, and the like, is always that they cannot believe in the goodness of God in their behalf. The Evangelist tells us something about this going back of some disciples on this occasion, and we are greatly the gainers by this. For it has given St. John the opportunity of recording the comment or answer which our Lord made as to their difficulty, and we may fairly take these words of His as belonging to the same great revelation of the doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist as the discourse itself in the synagogue.

‘Many therefore of His disciples hearing it said, This saying is hard, and who can hear it?’ They fastened

on the difficulty which met them in the statement that His Body was to be eaten and His Blood drunk as the condition or means of everlasting life. Their difficulty was therefore twofold. It was one difficulty, that the Body and Blood of our Lord were to be capable of producing everlasting life, and that in this the Bread from Heaven, of which He spoke, that is Himself, was so far superior to the manna which their fathers had eaten in the desert. It was a second and a greater difficulty, that the Body and Blood of our Lord were to be eaten and drunk, as they thought, in the same way as common food. This idea was repugnant to them, and filled them with a kind of horror. They imagined, probably, that He was to be slain, and then His lifeless body devoured, as cannibals devour their victims. They took the words quite literally, taking no notice of the other words of our Lord, which certainly implied that this eating and drinking was to take place only when something else had previously taken place, namely, the giving of His Flesh for the life of the world. In these words the truth of His Sacred Passion was at least insinuated. They took no notice of the fact, which they had witnessed and benefited by, on the mountain across the lake, namely, that in the feeding of the multitudes He had proceeded miraculously. Whereas this miracle might well be considered as an assurance that, when the time came for it to be repeated on a far grander scale and in a manner ineffably more divine, the power which had been shown in the multiplication of the loaves and fishes would not be wanting, for whatever excess of mercy and beneficence might be further required. They might well have repeated to themselves the words which St. Gabriel quoted to our Blessed Lady, that with God no word shall be impossible.

Thus, at least, that miracle might have prepared them

to place perfect faith and confidence in the assurance of our Lord that He was the Bread of Life, that by eating Him everlasting life and resurrection after death were to be obtained. If they had gone so far as this, that He was to be the source of life in a manner far superior to that in which the manna had sustained the daily life of the Israelites in the desert, they would not have found so much difficulty in the second part of the announcement, namely, that His^c Flesh and His Blood were to be eaten and drunk, even although nothing was said as to the manner in which this was to be done. And if, as has been said, they could have understood that He was to give His Flesh for the life of the world upon the Cross, it would not have been impossible for them to see, that in some marvellous and supernatural way, the Body and Blood, then separated one from the other in death, and by the sufferings of His sacrifice, might be communicated to the faithful in some form which would make them truly and really their food and drink, received in the usual way, though under different forms and appearances. For there is nothing in all the miracles of the Holy Eucharist which has not some foundation and anticipation in the miracles of our Lord, or in the marvels of the Old Testament.

It may seem that the reasonings here supposed must have required an unusual and very reflective faith. This is perfectly true. Our Lord had already, more than once, insisted on the necessity of this faith. He had worked a most stupendous miracle, a miracle which was in itself an anticipation of the mystery of the Blessed Eucharist, and He insisted on the faith in His word which this miracle ought naturally to have engendered. They might have expected that, after such a display of Divine power as present with Him for the authentication of His Mission, He might have some very wonderful

and difficult doctrine to reveal. Moreover, as we shall presently find Him saying, His Father was ready to pour fresh light into their hearts, so as to make their faith ready and quick to rise to the height to which it was now time for it to soar. His words were not simple words, but words which conveyed, by the Providence of the Father, to those who listened to them in right dispositions, the strength and light which were required for the docile reception of the truths which He was setting forth. Their docility or dulness, after all, depended, not on the difficulty of the truths proposed, but on the state of the hearts and minds to which they were addressed, on their readiness to follow the guidance of the Father of which He speaks, or the opposite qualities which would dispose them to reject that guidance.

The twofold difficulty of the disciples and of the multitude is met by our Lord in His own way, and in a very few and pregnant words. It was not the time, nor were they as yet fit, for a full explanation of the mystery for which our Lord now distinctly claimed their faith. But He could answer their difficulties by suggesting the truths which might enable them to prepare their own minds for the solution, afterwards to be furnished, when the Holy Eucharist came to be instituted by Him. 'But Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at this, said to them, Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of Man ascend up, where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and are life.' In the Greek Text, it is 'the words that I speak to you,' not 'have spoken.' We must thus find in these Divine words the solution, as far as our Lord thought it well to give any solution, of the difficulties of the disciples, and it is easy to see that what has happened was only what was certain to

happen. The words before us have been interpreted in various ways, and there has been a great conflict of opinion concerning them. Nor have they escaped the lot of so many of our Lord's sayings, in being applied by the enemies of the Christian truth in ways which seem to support their own errors of doctrine. Before proceeding to explain them as far as lies within our power, we may remind ourselves of any other passages of Sacred Scripture or sayings of our Lord, which may be useful in illustrating their possible meaning.

It must be remembered that the objections made during the course of the discourse itself had been expressed in two sentences. First, they had said, 'Is not this the Son of Joseph?' and the rest, 'How then saith He that I came down from Heaven?' In the second place, they had said, 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' It is possible that the minds of those to whom our Lord was now speaking, who were His own disciples, may have been affected by the same double objection, the difficulty about His Divine origin and Person, in the first place, and the difficulty about the eating and drinking of His Flesh and Blood, in the second place. If this was so, the answer made by our Lord in these two short sentences may be divided into two parts, with reference to the two objections with which He had to deal. He may be considered as answering the first, 'How saith He I came down from Heaven?' when He says, 'If then you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?' For certainly nothing could more completely answer this difficulty than the fact of the Ascension which they were to witness before many months were passed.

Our Lord may be thought to answer the second objection, 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?' when He says, 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the

flesh profiteth nothing,' and the rest. That is, it may be said, You must remember it is My Divine Person that is the cause of all life-giving power in Me, and that My Flesh, apart from that, can neither live by itself, nor be the cause of life in others. The words remind us of the expression of St. Paul, in his contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam, with reference to the Resurrection, when he says, 'The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a quickening spirit,'¹ where the Apostle uses the identical Greek words which St. John here reports as from the mouth of our Lord. The two objections were more or less linked together. For if they had believed that He had come down from Heaven, they would not have had so much difficulty in seeing that it would not be beyond His power to make Himself the Food of men in some wonderful and sacramental way, though perhaps they might have been led to think wrongly of the reality of His Body and Blood, as if there were something merely apparent and phantastic about His Human Nature. To meet this it would be necessary for Him to show the reality of His Humanity by dying on the Cross. On the other hand, if they could have grasped perfectly the truth of the Divinity of our Lord, which is involved in the truth that He came down from Heaven, in the Christian sense of the words, they could not have been so hopelessly entangled in the difficulty which prevented their receiving His words on faith, which is what He required them to do. This was the true solution to both these difficulties, the reception of the teaching of our Lord as that of a divinely authenticated Teacher. And, as His words related to His own Person, to His own Humanity, His Flesh and His Blood, the faith which would have made all things easy to them must have been a faith which

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

went beyond the simple truth that His words were divinely authenticated, as the words of a Prophet or an Apostle might have been. It must have been a faith like that which is professed, at the close of this incident, by St. Peter in the name of the Apostles, 'We have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.' We may now proceed to examine the words before us in detail.

The first part of this answer on the part of our Lord evidently refers to the mystery of His Ascension. It was to be at His Ascension that they were to see the Son of Man ascend where He was before, that is, into Heaven. And the words are put interrogatively, 'What and if,' 'If then,' as if they implied, as they have been understood by some, 'If you find a difficulty in this, what will be when you see the Son of Man ascend into Heaven?' The second part of the answer consists in a contrast between the spirit and the flesh. 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.' The last clause consists in the assertion that our Lord's words are spirit, and are life. 'The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, they are life.' The first part of the passage, then, reminds us very forcibly of the words used by our Lord on a very similar occasion to Nicodemus. The occasion was the difficulty pleaded by Nicodemus against the doctrine of spiritual regeneration. When our Lord had begun to speak of this to him, he had said, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born again?' Here was a difficulty quite as gross and as literal in its interpretation of the words of our Lord, as that of the people in the synagogue of Capharnaum. Our Lord had answered Nicodemus by speaking of the action of the Holy Ghost, and of the spiritual character of the new birth. And when Nico-

demus had again said, 'How can these things be done?'—using what one of the Catholic commentators has called the Jewish word 'How?'—our Lord had spoken solemnly about His own witness to the truth and their rejection of it. 'Amen, amen, I say to thee, we speak what we know and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony. If I have spoken to you earthly things, and you believe not, how will you believe if I shall speak to you heavenly things? And no man hath ascended into Heaven, but He that descended from Heaven, the Son of Man Who is in Heaven.'²

The two occasions are very similar. The first relates to incredulity about one great sacrament, and the second to incredulity about another great sacrament. In the first case, our Lord's thoughts seem to go instinctively to the wonderful truths He has to communicate about the heavenly things of the new Kingdom. It is as if He had said, 'I have more difficult things to tell you than this, things which are heavenly, while this is one of the mysteries of the earthly part of My Kingdom, and if I find you so incredulous about these easier matters, what will it be when I come to those that are more sublime? And you have no way of learning about Heaven except from Me,' and He goes on to speak of an Ascension. In the present case it may be supposed that this doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist is indeed an earthly mystery of the Kingdom, inasmuch as it is carried out in its application to the souls of men on earth. But it is also one of the heavenly truths of the Kingdom, or one which has its heavenly side. For it is the Body of our Lord in Heaven which is communicated to and made the food of the devout recipient on earth, and it is the truth that the Flesh and Blood of

² St. John iii. 11—13.

our Lord, as they are at present, living and glorious, that are received in Holy Communion, that makes the Christian faith in the mystery what it is. This truth may be considered as a greater strain on our faith than the simple doctrine that our Lord is the Bread of Life, capable of sustaining the life of those who are made partakers of Him throughout eternity. It is a further truth in the series of which the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist is made up, just as the heavenly things, we may suppose, which our Lord had in His mind when He spoke to Nicodemus, were further developments of the doctrine and consequences of the fact of spiritual regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost. This constitutes the resemblance between the two passages.

Some of the Fathers have founded their explanation of the passage before us on this appeal, so to call it, of our Lord to the future truth of His Ascension, though in various ways. Some understand it as if our Lord used the truth of His Ascension as a reason why they should be ready to believe what He had declared as to the life-giving powers of His precious Flesh. As if He had said, 'You do not believe this which I tell you now, but you will not find a difficulty when you have seen My glorious Ascension, for that will make you ready to believe anything, however great, of My Flesh and Blood.' Others understand it in the same way as the words to Nicodemus, as if our Lord had said, 'You find this hard to believe! what will you say when you have to receive the truth of My Ascension into Heaven?' The difficulty about this seems to be that they were to witness the Ascension themselves, and it would not be to them a matter of faith, but of knowledge. It seems, therefore, as if the mystery of the Ascension were appealed to by our Lord, rather as an explanation of the difficulty than as a truth that would present still greater difficulties.

Let us endeavour to draw out what may be contained in this explanation.

It must be remembered that, although the mystery of the Ascension was not the next in order of time of the great mysteries of our Lord to the moment of this discourse, it was nevertheless the mystery of all others which it was most natural for Him to speak of in connection with it, for more than one reason. In the first place, the Ascension presupposes the two mysteries of the Passion and the Resurrection, of which our Lord could not then speak. It has already been said, more than once, that He kept the Passion as a secret in His own Heart, and that of His Blessed Mother, until after the Confession of St. Peter, probably because He did not wish to put it forward until the faith of the Apostles in His Divinity was well formed and firmly rooted in their minds. But there was no such difficulty in speaking of the Ascension, inasmuch as He so often spoke of His having come down from Heaven. We have seen how the Passion and Death of our Lord are veiled in this discourse, though His words imply them, when He speaks of His Flesh and Blood as separate, of His Flesh given for the life of the world, and when He speaks of raising up the faithful at the last day. For His Resurrection is the cause of ours, and the mention of our resurrection involves the truth of His. This is a doctrine on which St. Paul most urgently insists in his famous argument to the Corinthians already referred to.

And again, the mystery of the Ascension is constantly connected, in our Lord's words, with its great fruit, as it may be called, that is, with the mission of the Holy Ghost. He had not yet begun to speak of this in His discourses. The doctrine of the mission and work of the Holy Ghost belongs to the latest period of our

Lord's teaching to His disciples. Thus the Ascension, which the disciples were to witness, involved the completion of our Lord's work on earth, for the glory of His Father and the good of souls, and it involved also the beginning of His work at the right hand of His Father in Heaven, and especially the sending of the Holy Ghost. It involved the whole of that new outburst of spiritual life and power in the Church which was to date from the Day of Pentecost. Thus the Ascension, considered in its position in this series of the Christian mysteries, would put a stop for ever to the more carnal and gross ideas of eating flesh and drinking blood, as of a man just put to death, which the words of our Lord might have suggested to the minds of some of His hearers. And to the Apostles and others, who were not, it may be supposed, among the number of the scandalized, it would make everything seem possible, as a part of the glorious marvels of the new Kingdom.

In the second place, the mystery of the Ascension is in a manner necessary for the Sacramental Life of our Lord, which presupposes and requires the glorification of His Sacred Body. It is that glorious Body which is now in Heaven, which is also made present in the consecrated Host on the altar, and the mere consideration of the gifts which belong to It, and of Its mode of existence, makes it comparatively easy to realize the ineffable wonders of this last invention of the Wisdom and Love and Power of God. Certainly if the disciples to whom He was speaking could have had their minds enlarged to a contemplation of the glories of the existence of our Lord in Heaven after the Ascension, the greater part of the difficulties which now clouded their minds would have vanished of themselves, on whatever point of the doctrine these difficulties might have fastened. Something in illustration of this has already

been said at the close of the last chapter. We are thus confirmed in that interpretation of this first part of our Lord's answer which finds in it a half-veiled disclosure of the doctrine concerning His own glorified existence at the time when He would be making His Flesh and Blood the food of Christians in the Blessed Sacrament. It is as if He had said, 'If you could understand now the conditions under which My Flesh and Blood will exist after My Ascension, you would be at least delivered from some part of the difficulties which you allege against the reception of My words on faith.'

The second part of our Lord's answer is more difficult of interpretation. 'It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' The opposition between the spirit and the flesh meets us often in Sacred Scripture, as when our Lord said to the disciples in the Garden, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' If we were to take the two clauses before us together, and apply this sense to these words, the meaning might be, this doctrine is difficult and indeed impossible to flesh and blood, but the spirit is the seat and source of life, and so can strengthen you to accept what is proposed to your faith, and the words which I have spoken to you have spiritual power to create in you the intelligence which they require, and is to give you the spiritual life which is founded on faith in what I say.' This meaning is to some extent confirmed by what follows, for our Lord goes on to speak of there being some among the disciples who had not faith, and He attributes their want of faith to the absence of that teaching of the Father of which He had just spoken, the teaching which is offered to all, but which is not accepted by some. This Divine gift would enable those who believed to believe, and its absence would make

it impossible for those who did not believe to believe. The words of our Lord were words of power as well as of light, conveying grace as well as proposing truth, and, when they fell on hearts prepared for them by the drawing of the Father, they would give the spirit and the life which were needed for the acceptance of the doctrine of this discourse. But the spirit and life might be in the words, and yet be absent from the hearts of those to whom the words were addressed, and this would be the case of those who were scandalized at the doctrine. In this explanation, then, we should follow the line suggested by the scriptural opposition between the spirit and the flesh.

Another interpretation, which has greater authority than that just given, understands our Lord's first words to convey an explanation of the difficulty about the eating and drinking of His Flesh and Blood. 'It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the Flesh profiteth nothing.' The last words of the discourse of which we have been speaking were concerned with the life which was to be given by the Holy Eucharist. 'As the Living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the Bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.' It seems natural to consider that our Lord's words now before us take up the last words of the discourse of which He is speaking, even though some interval of time may have passed since the conclusion of the discourse itself. In this way our Lord may mean that His Flesh, apart from His Divinity, considered simply as the flesh of a man, as the people in the synagogue considered it, was of no profit, and could not be the source of life. It was the Spirit, the Divinity, which alone could give to His Flesh its life-

giving power, as it gave to that Flesh itself its own life. So far this interpretation proceeds easily, and recommends itself to our approval. The great difficulty is in the following words: 'The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' That is, they must be understood in a spiritual and not in a carnal way. This is a very different thing from understanding them either in a simply material way, or in a merely figurative way. They are to be understood of such a manducation and such a drinking, as are those of which the spiritual existence is capable, which is conferred on a body by the spirit which gives to it its life. It is of this that our Lord is speaking. We may add a few considerations by way of further comment on this difficult passage.

It must be remembered that the words of which our Lord here speaks are those to which so much exception had been taken by the audience to whom they were addressed. All His words were spirit and life, but He specially names those which He had just delivered. We may suppose that He refers immediately and directly to the solemn and repeated declarations about the efficacy and the necessity of the partaking of the Flesh and Blood which He was to make the food of men in the Blessed Sacrament. 'Amen, amen, I say to you, Except you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me and I in him. As the Living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same also shall live by Me. This is the Bread that came down from Heaven, not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth of

this Bread shall live for ever.' These great words are, indeed, the foundation of a whole system of spiritual life.

It must also be remembered that the life of which our Lord speaks in connection with these words must be understood of the new life which He was to bring back with Him, as it were, from the grave, at His Resurrection. It was in that mystery that He finally conquered death, and that act of our Lord, in rising again from the dead, is the principle and foundation of our future resurrection to everlasting life. But for that, as St. Paul teaches us, we should not have the future life of the body to which we now look forward. Death is the punishment of sin, the penalty inflicted on all the children of Adam in consequence of the Fall. Death is the dissolution of the union between the soul and the body, and this union, once dissolved, can never be reconstituted by any power short of the power of God. Thus the resurrection of the flesh was not indeed a new doctrine in the time of our Lord, but it was a truth which depended for its accomplishment on the action of our Lord, and without His Resurrection it would not have been. In the great discourse which immediately precedes this in the Gospel of St. John, and which is related by him in his fifth chapter, our Lord had said a great deal about the resurrection as the reward and consequence of faith in Him, and He had spoken of the power given to Him by His Father of raising from the dead whomsoever He would. In the present discourse He begins where He had left off in the former discourse. But He soon passes on from the effect of faith in Him to the subject of the Bread which came down from Heaven, and we soon find Him connecting the rising to everlasting life with the eating of His Flesh and drinking His Blood.

In this way, then, our Blessed Lord seems to lead us on, further and further, into the mysteries and marvels of God in the bestowal of the gift of the new and everlasting life. Faith is its condition, and more than its simple condition, for it confers a right to it and in a certain sense begins it in us. Further, we are taught by St. Paul, in his famous passage in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, a doctrine which is not mentioned here, that it is the Resurrection of our Lord from the dead which is the actual conquest of death, the actual victory by which the possession of the future life is assured to us. This is one of the links in the chain not now pressed by our Lord. Further again, in the present discourse, we learn that the Blessed Eucharist, by which we are made partakers of the Body and Blood of our Lord, is the seed to us, not only of the spiritual life, but of the future life of our glorified bodies also. It is in that wonderful mystery that we receive in ourselves the life which He has in Himself, that we live by Him, as He lives by the Father Who has sent Him. It is not that all men will not rise at the last day, whether or not they have been partakers of this Sacred Banquet. For the victory of our Lord is so complete, that its fruits extend to the resurrection of the whole of the human race, the abolition of the reign of death wherever it has been established. For the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and the death of the whole human race is one of those works of the devil which must be destroyed. And there are other reasons also to be given, why the whole race of mankind must rise again, some, as our Lord says, to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of judgment.³ Thus we shall all rise, as the Apostle tells us, but we shall not all be changed. And the devout communicant will

³ St. John v. 29.

receive the gift of the resuscitation of the body by a special title and right, and he will have everlasting life by virtue of the Body and Blood of our Lord which he has received.

Now, it is this doctrine concerning His Blessed Body and Blood which our Lord seems here to speak of when He says, 'The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life.' His words may mean the words themselves, as addressed to the faithful heart, or the doctrine which they convey, or the things and sacraments to which that doctrine refers.⁴ The spirit of which our Lord here speaks is the spirit which has the power of giving and conferring life, and when He says that His words are spirit and life, He may be understood as saying that His words convey life, as the spirit conveys it and communicates it to the otherwise lifeless body, which profiteth nothing, and that they are themselves the life which they convey, as the spirit is the life. In this sense the words of our Lord concerning the everlasting life which is the fruit in us of the Blessed Eucharist, raise the soul to the spiritual life of faith, and are the life of that faith which they arouse and quicken. It is as if He had said, Let nothing tempt you to turn away from this truth. Welcome what I now say as the very truth, because I say it, and the fruit of My words, received on faith, in you, will be true spiritual life.

In the second place, again, the doctrine which is conveyed in these lifegiving words is the doctrine of spirit and of life, because it is the doctrine of the bestowal of true spiritual life and of life everlasting, which are the results, in the devout and faithful recipient of the Body and Blood of our Lord, of the reception of that Body and

⁴ This is often the meaning of the word *ρῆμα*, here used. See St. Luke i. 37, ii. 15; Acts v. 32, x. 37.

Blood. Again, the things and sacraments themselves of which this doctrine speaks are themselves the spirit and the life of man, for their reception makes him partaker of the true seed and principle of spirit and of life, inasmuch as they make him partaker of the Body and Blood of our Lord, the Son of Man, the true Bread which hath come down from Heaven. For we live by our Lord now, as we shall live by Him hereafter, our abiding in Him and His abiding in us is a present boon as well as a promise for the future. But after death we shall be raised up by Him to a new life, not only in spirit but in body also, and in that everlasting life alone shall we have the full fruit of the boon bestowed on us here and now.

‘But there are some of you that believe not.’ Our Lord seems to speak as One Who is conscious that He has made a great demand on the faith of those to whom He had been addressing Himself in His discourse, though not too great a demand for what might be expected of them, when the circumstances were duly considered. For He had ushered in the doctrine by a most stupendous miracle, which was moreover a kind of anticipation of the marvel which was proclaimed in the doctrine itself. The whole question of the reception or rejection of the doctrine depended on the faith, or the want of faith, of those to whom He spoke. If they had not faith, then, however full of life and spirit were the words which He uttered, they would fail to produce in the hearts of these men the effect which they were calculated to produce. St. John seems to wish us to note that our Lord was not deceived in any expectation that He might have formed of the success or failure of His words on this occasion, that He must have deliberately counted the cost and the risk, and made up His mind, as we should say, to

that alienation of many from Him which would follow on the promulgation of this mighty and marvellous doctrine. 'For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray Him. And He said, Therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to Me unless it be given him by My Father.' He refers to what He had said in this very discourse, in which He had insisted very urgently and repeatedly on the necessity of this teaching and drawing of the Father for all who were to come to Him. He shows by this that His words were not superfluous, and that the anticipations which made Him use them were fulfilled in fact. Thus from the very fact of the desertion and incredulity of some of those who had hitherto followed Him, St. John draws a fresh argument for faith in Him, inasmuch as He foreknew exactly what was to be the reception with which His doctrine would meet in different souls.

'After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.' Such is the feebleness and blindness of man, that the thing of all others which gives him the greatest scandal is the teaching him how wonderfully good to him is his God. Men will believe more readily that God has created them for the especial purpose of damning them and tormenting them for ever, than that He has invented so marvellous an excess of love as that which is contained in the Blessed Sacrament. They will let themselves be easily persuaded of some miserable figment of superstition, imposing on them the hardest conditions as the means of reconciliation with their Maker and Father, and for this they will be content with evidence of the slenderest kind, while the most magnificent miracles of our Lord, all the wonderful charm of His character, and the dignity of His preaching, are lost on them, when they are asked to receive some

message of infinite condescension and mercy. But our Lord has His compensation at least in the faithfulness and ready submission to His teaching of those who were the most dear to Him, and this incident, although dashed and marred to a certain extent by the first open mention of the hidden treachery which was already at work in the Apostolic band itself, still seems to be recorded here by St. John for the sake of this consoling feature. There were some at least who had not been disobedient to the teaching and drawing of the Father, some who would receive gladly whatever wonderful mysteries our Lord might have to propose to their faith, and who would afterwards be His chosen witnesses and emissaries for the propagation in the souls of others of a faith like their own. 'Then Jesus said to the twelve, Will you also go away?' Not that He doubted of their faith and love, but that He wished to give them an occasion of professing them, and perhaps also His Sacred Heart yearned for some such open consolation, as well as for the opportunity of rewarding it by still higher graces.

And Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.' These words are an anticipation of that great confession of St. Peter which brought on him the special blessing of being made the foundation of the Church, and they hardly differ at all from that confession, which was not now many weeks distant in point of time. But they are also the right and loyal answer to be given to all such inquiries, and to the difficulties which might seem to suggest them. Peter did not understand the manner in which the mysterious words of our Lord in the synagogue of Capharnaum were to be fulfilled. He could not have had, as yet, any inkling of the great mysteries which precede, in the

order of ideas, the institution of the Blessed Eucharist. He was not prepared to understand the manner in which our Lord was to make Himself the Bread of Life, the manner in which His Flesh was to become meat indeed, and His Blood drink indeed. The details of the doctrine presented to him were as difficult for his intelligence to grasp, as they were difficult to that of the disciples who were now leaving our Lord. But he had what they had not, faith in our Lord's words as those of One speaking in the name of God, nay, more, as those of the Incarnate God Himself. And so, whatever the difficulty, he could believe them to be true. It mattered little to his faith whether what he was required to believe were a small thing or a great thing. He looked only to the mouth which spoke the words, he believed it to be the mouth of God, and so, whatever might be the difficulty, he saw in this teaching nothing short of the words of eternal life. The words of eternal life are the words by which that doctrine is conveyed the observance of which secures eternal life, the words by believing which eternal life may be gained, and which are in themselves the message of eternal life.

Here again we remark that St. Peter does not say the words of truth, the words of salvation, the words of remission of sins, or of any other of the great boons of which our Lord spoke to them, the adoption of sons to God, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the like, but the words of eternal life. As if he also recognized the particular drift and tendency of this teaching of our Lord in reference to the everlasting life of which He had said so much. It is as if he caught up the very words which he had heard repeated so strongly, that by coming to Him, by believing in Him, by eating and drinking His Flesh and His Blood, they would have everlasting life and be raised up by Him at the last

day. This was to express a definite and clear faith, not only in the words of our Lord in general, whatever might be the precise subject of His teaching at any particular moment, but also in the result and conclusion to which His promise in this instruction tended to raise their hearts, the promise of everlasting life by means of the eating and drinking of His Flesh and His Blood. This instruction, then, to the faithful Apostle, contained the words of eternal life, although, how it was to be that the eating and the drinking of which our Lord spoke were to be accomplished, the mind of St. Peter was no more illuminated than the minds of the disciples who were now going back from their Master.

The words of the Apostle are not only the words of very lively and powerful faith, they are also the words of a very burning love. When he says, 'Lord, to whom should we go?' he expresses in the name of the whole company the devotion and affection with which His constant intercourse and familiar conversation with them had inspired them. How could they think of going to any one else? Who but He could satisfy their hearts? And this love for God and for our Lord and for His Church, after Him and in His place, is a great safeguard for faith as well as a constant feature in faithful souls. It involves the part of the will and of the heart in the choices of faith, which is indeed an intellectual act, but still an act in which the loving will comes in to command the attention of the mind to the motives of credibility, and it involves also the influence of the personal devotion which is natural in all who have any knowledge, either of God, or of our Lord, or of His Church.

There is something also which is very touching and very true about the exclamation of the Apostle of which

we are speaking. There are often difficulties, both as to faith and as to practice, which may present themselves to the Christian soul. No one can live godly in Christ Jesus, says the Apostle, without suffering persecution. It is often to our temporal interest, or for our apparent comfort, or for the peace of a family, or for the pleasure of those whom we love, that we should forsake our Lord. It is often possible for the bold and unscrupulous heretic to raise difficulties which the simple Christian cannot easily answer, and the maintenance of the true doctrine, as about the Blessed Sacrament, or the duty of confession, or the supreme authority of the Successor of St. Peter, may often involve us in great difficulties. But then there rises to the mind the saying of this chief Apostle, 'Lord, to whom shall we go?' Where else but in the Catholic Church is there peace and unity of doctrine and discipline, where is there the certain presence of the sacraments and the ministry of the priesthood? Where is there the Communion of Saints, where is there the ineffable solidity of faith resting on the one Rock? Nowhere. The simplest child can feel it, the poor peasant can know it as well as the most learned of theologians. The visible Unity reaches from East to West and from pole to pole, and there is in the Church, notwithstanding all the slanders of her enemies and all the scandals which her unworthy children may occasion, a brightness and security which are to be found only in her. She is not severe, or hard, or cruel to her children, she is not ambiguous in her teaching, she is not exacting in her claims on their allegiance and obedience, though it is not impossible for her yoke to press hard at some particular moment, when human weakness is in danger if it yield to a temptation or a serious trial. For even to ordinary Christians the cross is often brought home sternly, and the choice seems to lie between an almost

heroic act and disobedience. But even if the case were otherwise, even if there were trials more severe and sufferings more intense for the children of this good mother, it still remains true, as St. Peter here says, 'To whom shall we go?' The way of truth is here, the path of Heaven, the words of eternal life, and nowhere else is there aught of the same kind to tempt away the allegiance of her children.

'And we have believed and have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God!' The twofold expression of the Apostle may be meant as a profession of intense conviction, as if he had said, 'we are convinced both by faith and by knowledge, that Thou art the Christ.' The faith may have been generated by the consideration of the various kinds of evidence to the Mission of our Lord which had been accumulated by the Providence of the Father, and of which some account is given in the discourse of our Lord to the Jews of Jerusalem in the chapter of St. John which immediately precedes this. These evidences must have been accompanied by the interior workings of grace, that internal teaching of the Father of which mention is made in this same discourse. Besides this, their own familiarity with our Lord, their experience of His ways, of His dealings with their own souls, the ineffable majesty which shone out in all His words and works, that silent exercise of His Divine and royal power of which they were the constant witnesses, and which could not but imply that He acted as the Son of God, while whatever He claimed for Himself, however silently, could not but be true, must have added a kind of personal knowledge and experience of Him that was inconsistent with any opinion of Him which failed to acknowledge in Him the Christ Himself. And when this conviction had been reached, and had taken possession of their souls and hearts, nothing could be a

serious difficulty in His teaching, nor in the sacrifices which He might impose on them as His companions and ministers. Thus was our Lord consoled, even at this dark time, by the frank, loyal, and loving faith of His Apostles, expressed by St. Peter.

But there was yet something of which He alone, except the poor victim of temptation himself, was aware, which might well dash the cup of satisfaction from His lips. We find from this incident that, at the point in the history at which we are now arrived, the perversion of the future traitor had already begun, and was far advanced. No account is given us of the process by which this great triumph of Satan had been so far attained. We may gather from the words of St. John on a much later occasion, when he speaks of the final outbreak of the traitor at the Supper at Bethany, when he made his objection to the lavish magnificence of St. Mary Magdalene on the score of the value of her ointment for the service of the poor, that the history of the gradual fall of Judas had begun with his appropriation to his own purposes of the money with which he was charged, leading on to the continual indulgence of the sin of avarice, as well as the violation of justice and of poverty.

But at what point of time this had begun, we have no certain instruction. It has been already said that it is by far the most probable account of Judas to think that, when he was called to be an Apostle, he was fit for the vocation which our Lord then gave him, that he had some particular talents which fitted him for the responsibilities of his office, and that he might have won his crown by faithfulness as well as St. Peter or St. John. Not a year had yet elapsed since the vocation of the Apostles, and it seems that Judas was not one of those who had been the earliest companions of our Lord. Since that time he

had been for long seasons in close attendance on our Lord, he had seen His miracles, he had heard His teaching, he had even been sent out to preach and to work miracles himself in the Name of our Lord, like the rest. The temptation of greed had crept upon him almost unconsciously to himself, and the little indulgences he allowed himself, in the way of dishonesty, deadened and darkened his soul, made him cold to our Lord, and alienated his heart from Him. In such a state of heart any serious trial might have swept him from our Lord's side.

We cannot but think that Judas was the object of the tenderest care and forethought, on his Master's part, of remonstrance, warning, delicate contrivances of love, whereby he might have been won back, but for his own resolute obstinacy. The dealings of our Lord with the souls whom He leads to perfection are infinitely beautiful, but perhaps His pleadings and winning ways with those who are turning away from Him are as beautiful as any part of His marvellous conduct towards us. This history of Judas would perhaps be as full of wonderful manifestations of our Lord's character, if we could understand it, as the history of His dealings with St. John himself. And we cannot doubt that this occasion of the protest of loyalty on the part of St. Peter and the rest was seized by our Lord for the purpose of conveying to Judas, for the first time, a public warning which he would understand, although others might not. Perhaps the Apostles gathered round their Master with professions of love and devotion, echoing the professions of their chief, with hearts glowing with faith and gratitude, and a kind of holy indignation at those who were leaving Him. And Judas may have been as demonstrative as any, whether, for the moment, he forgot the disloyalty to which he had been yielding, or for the sake of not betraying himself

before the others, as one who did not share their enthusiasm. For our Lord is said to have addressed Himself not to St. Peter only, but to all of them, in His answer.

Jesus answered them, 'Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' The words might sound cold and sharp at the moment, but they were words of infinite charity as well as of Divine truth. Charity to the traitor, as has been said, that he might be warned that he was living with One Who could read his heart and perfectly understand its state. Many a time such a warning has brought about a conversion, and the persons who have received such admonitions have lived to reckon them among the greatest blessings of their life. A true and earnest fraternal correction is one of the services of charity which are the most uncommon, even among religious persons. It was charity also to the other Apostles, lest they might build with too great security on their feelings of personal devotion to our Lord, and become in any, even the slightest, respect, careless in their watchfulness against temptation. At a later time, when our Lord spoke at the Last Supper about the consummation of the wickedness which was now brooding in the heart of Judas, we find that the Apostles were so distrustful of themselves as to ask one by one, 'Lord, is it I?' And it may be supposed that the humble estimate of themselves was fostered by warnings such as this of which we are here told. In this sense the warning now given may have been of the greatest service to them all. It may also have served to increase their faith in our Lord Himself, as so perfectly foreknowing what was at work so secretly in the bosom of one of His companions. It may also have disclosed to them the real condition under which they must hereafter live as His companions, with a traitor among them, and themselves

liable at any moment to have their loyalty very severely tested and tried.

He answered them, 'Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?' The words are sometimes thought to be a kind of holy exaggeration, for at that time Satan may not have had complete mastery over Judas as he seems to have had at the end, just before the Passion, nor, at any time, could Judas have been by nature a devil. But it seems best to think that our Lord is here referring in His own mind to the fall of the evil angels, who were raised to a great height in the Kingdom of God, and yet fell from thence by their own malice and by yielding to a temptation to sin. For the Apostles were indeed raised very high already in the Kingdom of our Lord, and yet they were liable to fall as the angels fell. One of them was already on the path to the same ruin with the fallen angels. This interpretation is confirmed by the passage in St. Luke,⁵ where our Lord answered the seventy-two disciples who had come back to Him, rejoicing in the power they had exercised over the devils in His Name, by telling them that He had seen Satan like lightning fall from heaven, and that they were not to rejoice that the spirits were subject to them, but rather that their names were written in Heaven.

St. John explains the allusion of our Lord, not meaning that we should understand that it was plain to any one but Himself at the time. 'Now He meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for the same was about to betray Him, being one of the Twelve.' St. John does not mean to imply that Judas had at this time conceived any plan of betraying our Lord to His enemies. He was in a state of mind which prepared him for apostacy, though he might not at that moment have contemplated any act

⁵ x. 18.

of treachery against his Master. It is another question how far the difficulties raised against the doctrine which our Lord had been delivering had any effect on the faith of Judas. Our Lord had made large and searching demands on the faith of His Apostles, as well as on that of the multitudes to whom He had spoken. A state of mind such as that of Judas is a fatal preparation for the listening to doubts against the faith. Then, when there is some new declaration on the part of authority, which gives people, already disloyal at heart, an opportunity either of a fresh act of intellectual submission, or of a plausible disobedience, it is constantly the case that the occasion is embraced for such disobedience. Or, without any fresh call on the faith of such men as Judas, it is frequently the case with them that their secret infidelity to the law of their conscience induces a great laxity and lukewarmness in the exercises of prayer and communication with God, and this again tends to weaken their faith. Thus Judas may have been unable to give to this magnificent revelation made by our Lord in the synagogue of Capharnaum, that loving and hearty assent which it received from the other disciples. Some weakness of faith is certain to follow on the deliberate indulgence in any bad habit, although faith is so strong a gift of God that it can survive many deviations from the path of virtue. And it has come to be so commonly recognized that the decay of faith is preceded by moral obliquity, that, when we hear of any apostacy from the Church, we are tempted at once to ask what moral fault has led to such a catastrophe. If the faith of Judas was wavering, we can see, in our Lord's knowledge of his state, an additional reason for the warning which He now gave him.

CHAPTER XIII.

The question about Traditions.

St. Matt. xv. 1—20; St. Mark vii. 1—23; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 75.

WE have but few notes of time between the great miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, and the turning point in this part of our Lord's teaching, the confession of St. Peter. The interval seems to have been one of a considerable number of weeks, and it is broken for us by a few facts which are recorded by the Evangelists, which do not, however, at all suffice to fill up the whole of the time which apparently must have elapsed. The general character of these incidents is uniform. They all seem to represent our Lord to us as retiring from one place after another, to avoid persecution, and for this purpose as betaking Himself to parts of the country where He was not likely to be known. With the great exception of the feeding of the four thousand, the miracles of this period, as far as they are recorded for us, seem almost to have been forced on our Lord by the importunities or faith of those at whose petition they were wrought. The general impression left by the history is that our Lord was very desirous to avoid an open collision with the Jewish authorities, until, at least, He had secured the solid foundation of the Church which it was His object to build on the faith of the Apostles in His Divinity. On the other hand, the malignity of His enemies seems to pursue him everywhere, until at last, after the confession of St. Peter, He confronts it rather than avoids it, and

carries the Gospel preaching into the very neighbourhood of Jerusalem and the country of Judea itself, which had not as yet been made the scene of His preaching, save, perhaps, for a short time at the very outset of His Ministry.

The incident of which we are now to speak must probably have taken place soon after the discourse in the synagogue of Capharnaum, of which the last chapters have given a full account. It was probably while our Lord was still in the immediate neighbourhood of Capharnaum that He was beset by some emissaries of the Chief Priests of Jerusalem, sent down, as it appears, by those authorities for the express purpose of watching, and, if possible, ensnaring Him. Perhaps His not having been present at the last feast of the Pasch may have attracted remark, and it is very likely that His friends, who went to the feast from Galilee, would have spoken much about the wonders which He had been performing there. In any case these Scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem took an early opportunity of attacking Him publicly. The point which they selected was not one in itself of very vital importance, but it was on a matter which would naturally strike them, on account of the exaggerated and superstitious views which they held about it, and the great place which it filled in their own daily lives. It came to their knowledge that He did not insist on certain customary purifications as matters of necessity, such as the washing of the hands before taking place at the table for the ordinary meals. It is not probably meant that the disciples made a principle of not washing their hands before eating, but that our Lord had not thought it right to insist on any regulations of this kind as part of the rules of His community. In this He was acting just in the same way as He had acted about the far more important

matter of fasting, not that He did not teach His disciples the practice of fasting and other mortifications, but that He did not make rules with regard to this matter binding on all who were to be enrolled among His followers.

Our Lord left these matters to individuals, setting Himself, no doubt, the example of most perfect propriety and decency in all such minor matters, and at the same time taking care that the precious time and thought, which were wanted for more important things, should not be occupied on these comparative trivialities. Thus it had come to be a kind of common remark about His disciples, that they were not obliged to keep to a number of ceremonial observances which were thought very highly of by the Jews of the strictest observance, such as the Pharisees. With such men, these observances were not so much valued for their own sake, or on account of the spiritual meaning which they might have, as because they were considered as part of the tradition of the ancients. Thus they had a sort of rubrical importance, and the neglect of them was considered as an act of independence and disobedience to Church authority. Such neglect implied a disregard for the whole system of which they formed a part. It was the object of our Lord not to recognize this system as having any authority. This may have been partly on the principle which He had avowed in answer to the question of the disciples of St. John about fasting, namely, that He would not encumber His Church with a number of patchwork regulations, sewing new cloth on to an old garment, pouring new wine into old bottles, and the like. It was also because of the very serious evils which had grown up under the system, of which He showed so much disregard. Every item in such a system may be harmless in itself, but yet the whole

system may constitute an intolerable bondage, and divert the attention from the serious matters of the law and service of God. Further, when such a system becomes an instrument in the hands of designing and selfish people for the obtaining their own ends, it degenerates into a monstrous iniquity, and may lead to distinct violations of higher and even Divine laws.

Our Lord indeed seems to have seized on the opportunity given Him by the attack now made, to attack His enemies in return, not for the sake of attacking them, or of gaining a controversial victory in the presence of the multitudes whom they were endeavouring to poison against Him, but because He had but few occasions of bearing His witness against the many corruptions which had been introduced into the common teaching of the Jewish schools. This seems to have been almost the first occasion on which He thus attacked the general and formal teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees. But He did it now in the most decided manner, calling their attention to the gravity of their errors, and filling them with confusion. His manner appears to have attracted the notice of the disciples as something new, and to have given occasion to a kind of remonstrance. This again led Him to use strong words concerning the Pharisees as blind and leaders of the blind, hinting that they were plants not planted by His Heavenly Father, and so doomed to be rooted up. Thus the whole incident becomes important, not only on account of the truths set forth by our Lord and the errors denounced by Him, but also as furnishing a new feature in the conduct which He thought fit to pursue towards them.

‘And there assembled together unto Him the Pharisees and some of the Scribes coming from Jerusalem. And when they had seen some of His disciples eat bread with common, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault,

saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the traditions of the ancients? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.' St. Mark adds a long note, as it would be called in a modern book, explaining to the Christians for whom he wrote the customs of his own people which are here referred to. 'For the Pharisees and all the Jews eat not without often washing their hands, holding the tradition of the ancients, and when they come from the market, unless they be washed, they eat not, and many other things there are that have been delivered to them to observe, as the washing of cups, and of pots, and of brazen vessels, and of beds. And the Pharisees and Scribes asked Him, Why do not Thy disciples according to the tradition of the ancients, but they eat bread with common hands?'

The rules of which the Evangelist here speaks seem to have been founded on the prescription given in the Mosaic Law about the touching of the dead bodies of certain unclean animals or birds, which brought with it the stain of ceremonial uncleanness, involving the obligation of washing the garments and being unclean until the evening, that is, unfit to enter the tabernacle or the Temple. These regulations were given by Moses, as it seems, with a view to the inculcating on the people the miserable character of sin, which was figured in all these ceremonial disabilities. The tradition went much further than the direct law, for it was not from any consciousness that they had certainly contracted this ceremonial uncleanness that the Jews of our Lord's time took all these precautions, but from the fear least by accident they might have contracted it. It is also probable that the tradition was enforced with a special view to keeping up the separation between the Jews and the Gentiles among whom they lived, for the touch of a heathen was to them as defiling as the touch of a dead body, and in their

frequent intercourse with the heathen there might possibly have been contact without the knowledge of the Jew himself. There is perhaps something analogous to this feeling among the Hindus, the higher castes among whom are so scrupulously afraid of any contact with those of the lower castes. It looked like devotion to these precepts of purity, to be so anxious to wash away even the possibility of contamination, whether it had been contracted or not. But it is also clear that the observance of traditions of this kind must have tended very strongly in the direction of the fostering the pride and exclusiveness of the chosen nation, and must have reminded them of their supposed superiority in the eyes of God. The time was coming when all this separation and distinction between one nation and another were to be cancelled by our Lord, Who was to die for all alike, and to found His Church on the Gentiles as well as on the Jews.

This may perhaps have been in our Lord's mind when He protested so earnestly, on this occasion, against the traditions and the system to which they belonged. The spirit of nationalism in any form is hostile to the spirit of the Catholic Church, which is set up in the world that all nations may find in her their one true home, and unlearn all the detestable animosities which divide them. But even without this prospective view of what would be one of the greatest difficulties of the Apostles, and also of the Church after them in all ages down to our own, there was mischief enough in the system of these traditions to make our Lord desire to denounce them. The system had a direct tendency to encourage the idea that ceremonial defilement and purification were the only true defilement and purification. The extreme attention which the punctual observance of all these prescriptions demanded, occupied the mind and gave it no time to

think of the far deeper and truer defilements of the soul, such as those which our Lord went on in the course of this instruction to enumerate. Men were thinking all day long whether they had incurred ceremonial uncleanness, and all the while their hearts remained unquestioned and their consciences were left without examination. Thus there may have been many cases, as there certainly were some, among these very Pharisees, in which men were leading impure lives, and in which their hearts were full of ambition, or envy, or malice against their neighbour, and yet they were still most scrupulously observing these prescriptions about purification and defilement. The care for these observances did not necessarily make them forget the weightier matters of the law, but it occupied their thoughts, it filled them with self-satisfaction, it secured them one of the greatest of all snares, the reputation of faithful observance of the requirements of the law of God with corrupt and depraved hearts within. It made them, to use our Lord's expression, to be like whited sepulchres, beautiful outside and full within of the bones of dead men and all uncleanness.

Yet our Lord did not directly attack this weak point in the practice of these men. He chose for His censure a serious violation of the law of God of which these Pharisees were commonly guilty. He either began or concluded by applying to them the words of Isaias the prophet, in which grave censure was passed on the Jews of the time of the prophet, for honouring God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him, and for teaching doctrines and commandments of men. This denunciation is placed by St. Mark at the beginning of the answer of our Lord and by St. Matthew at the end, but it is easy to suppose that the one Evangelist is speaking historically, with the main object of giving what our Lord answered, and that the other follows exactly the

order of time. If our Lord's answer be examined carefully, it will be found that He does not give any direct reason for the practice of the disciples. He does not feel bound to answer such a cavil. He gives to the multitudes, in the most public and urgent manner, a principle which goes far beyond the defence of the practice which was called in question. For it reaches to the definition of what is truly defiling and what is not defiling. To the objectors He gives a sharp reproof, for their violation of the law of God by their traditions, in the manner which He explains.

Our Lord first exposes the hypocrisy of the Pharisees before proceeding to give the principle as to defilement to the people. He retorts their own charge on themselves with tenfold force. They had said, 'Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients?' and then had named the eating with unwashen hands as the point to which they referred as justifying their charge. He retorts, 'Why do you also transgress the commandments of God for your tradition?' The point in which He charges them with this grave fault is the point of excusing the son or daughter from the observance of the Divine law which enjoins the honouring of the father or the mother, under the pretext of making whatever they had, by which they might assist their parents, a Corban, that is, a gift or offering vowed to God. 'For God said, Honour thy father and mother, and he that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death.' This injunction is made up of two, one of which is from the Decalogue itself, and therefore the direct word of God, while the other is the command expounded by Moses. There can be no doubt that the commandment of honouring father and mother extended to that kind of honour which consists in practical assistance, in the relieving the poverty or supporting the weakness and failing

strength of the parent, and that this is a Divine precept, incumbent on all.

Nevertheless the Jews had contrived to elude it, and even to make its fulfilment impossible, in certain cases. There was also another precept by which a gift vowed or given to God, that is, to the service of God or of the Temple, could not be recalled. This kind of dedication may have been made in many various ways. Thus the Prophet Samuel was given by his mother to the service of the Lord, and brought up in consequence in the Tabernacle, under the charge of the High Priest Eli. Another instance of personal dedication is found, according to some commentators, in the sacrifice of his daughter by the judge Jephtha, who, in consequence of his vow, dedicated her to God in perpetual virginity. In the same way the consecration of herself by vow to God of our Blessed Lady may come under the same law as an irrevocable dedication. But in ordinary life, the Corban was a sum of money, a property, or anything of the kind, which was given or promised to God as an offering to His service. We have an illustration of this in the treasury of the Temple, into which the people cast their offerings, and to which the widow whom our Lord praised gave her two mites, her whole substance. But what was thus offered was necessarily that which the donor had power to bestow, and which he was not already bound by any law to apply in other ways. The sustenance, therefore, of a parent who had fallen into poverty, or who was on any account in need of help from his child, could not be made matter of an offering of this kind. Thus there are instances in the history of the Church in which persons who have been consecrated to God, as was Samuel, have had to leave their convents or monasteries for the sake of the support of their families, and a person who was of necessity to his family

in this way would not be allowed to enter religion as long as the impediment existed. There would in such a case be a conflict between the law of Corban and the law of God. The latter might enjoin the maintenance or assistance of a parent, and the former might prescribe the inviolability of the act of dedication in a certain sense. In such a conflict, it could not be doubtful which of the two prescriptions was to give way. The law of the dedication would not bind, so long as the other law fell on the same subject-matter, and if the former was insisted on, to the exclusion of the rights of the other, there would be the case with which our Lord charges His critics, of the substitution of the human law for the Divine law.

But the case of the traditions went far beyond this simple conflict. It seems that these glosses on the law laid down that the thing need not have been actually made over to the Temple or the service of God. It was enough for the son to have simply said that it was Corban, and that being such, the intention of its dedication would be as profitable to his parent as to himself, and that the parent could now look for nothing more from him. The words having once passed the lips, were enough to constitute this irrevocable dedication, whether the property had been made over or not. The words might have been uttered insincerely, or imprudently, or unrightfully, in violation of the Divine obligation of honouring the father or the mother, and yet they were not to be set aside. Our Lord seems to have had this case in His mind, when He went on to explain how it was that the Pharisees transgressed the commandment of God. ‘But you say, Whoever shall say to father or mother, Corban! the gift, whatsoever it is, from me shall profit thee, and he shall not honour his father or mother.’ That is, as it seems, you lay it down

that what is enough is that a man shall say to his father or mother, the assistance which you can have from me consists in the offering which I have made to God of the substance out of which I might otherwise have relieved you, and thus it comes about that the person in question does not honour in the true way his father or mother. They may starve, or go to prison for debt, they may be without the necessaries of life or health or due care in time of sickness, but the son has done all he was obliged to by saying the words, 'It is Corban.' He goes on, 'and further you suffer him not to do anything for his father or mother.' That is, not only do you excuse him, if he does no more than utter these vain and hypocritical words, words which may be spoken in anger, or without thought or prudence, but you make it impossible for him to undo the wrong he has done, for you do not allow him to recall his gift, or even the announcement or declaration of his intention of making the gift. For it seems that a part of these traditions was that nothing could recall an offering thus made, even though the circumstances might substantially change, and so constitute a grave reason for an alteration in the obligation. 'And you have made void the commandment of God by your tradition which you have given forth, and many other such like things you do,' as St. Mark puts in the earlier part of his account, 'leaving the commandments of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pots and of cups, and many other things you do like to these.'

To leave the commandment of God is not quite the same thing as to transgress it. It may be that, where there is a great attention insisted on with regard to a number of observances such as those mentioned by our Lord, there is no time for the mind to be attentive to the requirements of the Divine law. This is the case

with some scrupulous persons, who are always fidgetting over minor details, and so have no time for the solid care of their conscience, just as our Lord reproached the Pharisees later on for giving tithes of rue and mint and anise and cumin, and for neglecting, at the same time, the weightier matters of the law. Thus their error was twofold. In the first place, they taught what was directly contrary to the law of God, inasmuch as they taught men to evade the direct obligation of succouring their parents, by means of the practice of Corban, which they distorted into something which went far beyond the intention of the lawgiver in establishing that practice. In the second place, even though their practices about ablutions and the like, for the sake of avoiding possible contamination, were not in themselves wrong, but only foolish and exaggerated and tending to superstition, still they taught them as having an authority which they had not, and as being obligatory when they were not obligatory, as we see from their censure of the disciples of our Lord in this place. But it is always mischievous to exaggerate the authority of any custom or regulation, as we see constantly when scrupulous persons are tempted to consider the rules of a confraternity, for instance, as binding under pain of sin. In this case the merely human recommendations, as they probably were at the beginning, of frequent ablutions and the like, were magnified into strict obligations, and thus a burthen was laid upon souls which God did not intend them to bear. And further, those who attached so much importance to these regulations as to consider it wrong to violate them, were in danger of making true justice and virtue consist in these external matters, and at the same time, by the very attention which they paid to them, they were likely to forget the real precepts of God and the care of their conscience in their regard. All these points are touched

on in the words of our Lord as reported for us by the Evangelists.

Our Lord probably concluded His direct answer to the objectors of whom we are speaking by the quotation from the Prophet Isaias, which St. Matthew places in this order. 'Hypocrites! well hath Isaias prophesied of you, saying, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments to men.' His next step was to teach the multitude the true principle as to defilements and the like. 'And calling again the multitude to Him, He said to them: Hear ye Me all and understand. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but what cometh out of the mouth, that defileth a man. There is nothing from without that enters a man, that entering into him can defile him. But the things which come from a man, those are they that defile a man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.' It would seem from these words that our Lord wished to go beyond, in the principle which He was laying down, the immediate occasion of the objection which had been made. The cavillers had fastened on the fact that the disciples were not obliged by our Lord to wash their hands before taking their food, and the precaution was founded on their fear of casual pollution by contact with something which was unclean. But the point to which His words most directly refer, is that of the distinction between clean and unclean meats, almost as if He had in His mind the trouble which was to ensue in the Church on this very account, when the Gentiles came to be admitted to the kingdom of God.

The great question which St. Paul had to fight was this about the distinction of meats, which was used as a reason for keeping the Jewish Christians apart from

their Gentile brethren. We find this difficulty in the mind of St. Peter, when he was warned by the vision of the linen sheet that was let down from Heaven, containing 'all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things of the earth, and fowls of the air.' When the Apostle heard the words, 'Arise, Peter, slay and eat,' he answered, 'Be it far from me, for I did never eat anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice spoke to him again the second time: 'That which God hath cleansed, do not thou call common.' And when the messengers of Cornelius had brought him to their master and his friends, St. Peter began by saying, 'You know how abominable it is for a man who is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation, but God hath showed me to call no man common or unclean.'¹ Here we have the distinction between meats, which was so much insisted on in the Mosaic law, used as a natural and almost recognized symbol of the difference between the holy nation and all others. It is quite probable that the scrupulous rule which made the Jews of our Lord's time so careful about their ablutions, came in great measure from the possibility of contracting ceremonial contamination by contact with the heathen, the latter being unclean, precisely on account of the liberty which they allowed themselves as to the use of meats which were forbidden to the Jews. Thus, when our Lord instructed the multitude in this place, He gave them the true principle on which they might solve all these legal restrictions. If the meats which entered a man's mouth could not defile him, then the Gentiles were not defiled by the use of the forbidden meats. Thus the comparative neglect by the disciples of these legal purifications, at least to the extent in which they were insisted on by the Jews in general, was a kind of preparation for the

¹ Acts' x. 28.

time when the separation between the nations would be broken down in the new kingdom, and it rested thus on an important truth, just as the comparative liberty introduced by our Lord with regard to the observance of the Sabbath was a similar preparation for the use of the authority of the Church, in modifying and changing the whole system of such observances.

The purpose of our Lord in this respect may thus explain the seeming departure from the direct question in the instruction which He now gives to the multitude, which He ends by the emphatic words, that 'if any man have ears to hear, let him hear.' That is to say, the doctrine now laid down was of the utmost importance, while at the same time it contained truths and principles which required consideration and reflection to master and digest them in their full meaning. Our Lord did not explain the parabolic words which He had used. He left the simple principle to work its way in the minds of the people, and it must have seemed to many of them a strange revelation. It appears very natural that the Pharisees were scandalized at the teaching of our Lord on these points. It was not only that they were put to silence by the severe reproof which He had administered to them, against which it does not appear that they had any defence to make. The doctrine which scandalized them was the doctrine of defilement from within and not from without. It swept away at once a whole range of ceremonial impurities and of regulations which were in use for their removal. It contained in germ the whole of the liberty of the Gospel in such matters, and for this it is quite certain that they could not be prepared. They may not have divined at once all that was contained in the principle, but they must have felt instinctively that their ceremonial system was threatened at its very root. They might almost feel as if the law itself was being

assailed, for the distinctions between meats and the regulations about not touching the carcasses of animals and the like, were certainly a part of the code recognized by all.

‘Then came His disciples and said to Him, Dost Thou know that the Pharisees when they heard this word were scandalized? But He answering said, Every plant which My Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up. Let them alone. They are blind and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.’ It may be supposed that the remark of the disciples may have been prompted by some desire that our Lord might explain His teaching in some way which might conciliate these Pharisees. He had done this on other occasions. Even when they invented their terribly malicious calumny about casting out devils by the prince of the devils, He had reasoned calmly and gently with them before warning them of their danger, and prophesying of the return of the evil spirit, who had been cast out. But on this occasion our Lord would have no half measures taken with them. He would not mind their scandal nor make any attempt to soothe their enmity. The time was approaching when He would adopt a different line towards them, and make light of their enmity, braving them in their very stronghold at Jerusalem. It does not appear, moreover, that the sharp reprehension which He had delivered to them had been delivered in the presence of the multitude, for our Lord called the multitude to Him before He went on to lay down the doctrine about interior defilement. Thus to the multitude He had only said those words about that which enters and that which comes forth from a man. His teaching now is the principle on which the Church and the saints of God deal with the cavillers and faultfinders as to the Catholic

teaching in all ages. After a time it is of no use to attempt to reason with them. Thus St. Paul bids St. Titus: 'A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid, knowing that he that is such a one is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgment.'²

Of course the attacks made on the Catholic doctrine must be answered, and their falsehoods exposed, for the sake of the faithful souls which may suffer by these calumnies and sophistries. But the persons are to be let alone. It does as much harm as good to make any overtures to them. They look at everything in the distorted light of their own judgments, and are only spurred on to greater malice and pride by the remonstrances offered to them. The providence of the Father disposes of them in due time. No one can flourish against the Church. No one can remain seriously and permanently influential, and leave behind him a work that will last, except it be propped up by some external power, as an Establishment by the State, if his work be not the work of God. Moreover the Providence of God is in a peculiar manner bound to bring to nought the men who set themselves up as teachers in opposition to the Church, and as critics of her methods and measures. For these reasons it is better that such men should be left alone, in the sense in which our Lord here gives the command. And if such men are to be let alone, in the way of making no special efforts to conciliate them, so also are they to be disregarded by the servants of God, so far that no account is to be taken of their opposition. They are not to be considered or attended to. They are blind and leaders of the blind. The end of them is that both will fall into the pit. A blind man may be led by others who can see, but these

² Titus iii. 10, 11.

men will never think of letting others lead them. If they would not be leaders, they might be saved from the destruction which awaits them, and those who will follow them. But the radical misfortune of their case is that being blind they will needs lead, and will not be led.

‘And Peter answering, said to Him, Expound to us this parable.’ The Apostles themselves had not, therefore, understood the full meaning of the principle which our Lord had laid down. They were themselves Jews, and as such had been brought up in all the traditions of the holy people, which certainly included the distinction of meats and the ceremonial disqualifications of which we have spoken. Our Lord had taken the opportunity afforded Him by the question of these Scribes, to introduce a principle which swept all these things away. He had not developed it to any extent. He had left it like a seed to germinate in the hearts and minds of those who would consider it and ponder over it. It was in itself a self-evident truth to reason, but it did not the less militate against the literal prescriptions of the Law, if these were not understood in the spiritual sense which they were doubtless meant to convey. But the minds of the Apostles ought to have been quicker in grasping the truth of the principle itself, and in recognizing the conclusion to which its application by our Lord must lead, namely, that the ceremonial disqualifications enacted by the Law could not really affect the moral state of the soul, and that so they must be considered as signifying the great necessity of carefulness to escape moral defilement and to purify the soul from the defilement when it had been contracted.

Our Lord therefore showed some displeasure when the question was asked Him about the meaning of the parable. ‘But He said, Are you also without under-

standing? Do you not understand, that whatsoever entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast into the privy? Understand you not that everything from without entering into a man cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth forth into the belly, and goeth out into the privy, purging all meats? But He said, that the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man. For from within out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, murders, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within, and defile a man. These are the things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doth not defile a man.'

The truth set forth by our Lord in these words is self-evident, and hardly requires explanation. Like so many others of the same class, it rests ultimately on the true conception of God. The heathen might have come to persuade themselves that their hearts were their own secret property, as it were ; not open, as all right-minded men recognize at once, to the eye of God. But even in a system in which there were no true ideas of God, it would still remain sufficiently clear that defilement must begin from within, that the heart is the centre and seat of moral action and choice, and that men can neither be guiltless when the heart is foul, nor guilty when the heart is clean. It is as immoral to absolve from guilt the man who has intended and designed a sin which has never come to light, as to condemn the man who has by accident, and against his will, done an act which if intended would have been sinful. So far, the guilt or innocence depends on the state of the heart and the action of the will. But the feeling of guilt from which no man is free

who violates his conscience, is something more than a witness to an immutable moral law to which he is responsible. Conscience cannot be rightly understood unless it includes the appeal to a higher Power, a Power Who is aware of all that passes in the heart, and Who will vindicate His own law when it is transgressed. The only way of escaping this conclusion would be by supposing that God did not care to trouble Himself about the actions of men. But this supposition leaves unexplained the phenomena of conscience. For an appeal to a higher Judge, Whose wrath and justice are to be feared, would not be a part of the moral constitution of men, unless the Judge so appealed to were not only cognizant of the offence committed interiorly, but also prepared to execute a just sentence thereupon.

Where, on the other hand, this watchful observation of the human heart on the part of God is recognized, it becomes impossible to use any other standard of guilt or innocence, than the decision of this unerring and all-seeing Judge. The observances of which the Jews made so much account may have been useful to many in reminding them of the keenness of the Divine insight into their hearts, and the danger of pollution before the eyes of God. In this they were useful to those who practised them. If they tended to make men think that defilement was contracted by external acts alone, and got rid of by external purification, then they were likely to degrade the people of God below the level of thoughtful heathens. Man can only truly be what he is in the sight of God, and if God looks into his heart, man is defiled or innocent, according to what is there for God to see. The idea of a God Who cannot read the heart, or Who can judge of man by anything short of that which is the true spring and seat of moral action, is an absurdity.

The long catalogue of sins of the heart, which afterwards proceed into action, as given by our Lord, does not call for any great elucidation by way of comment. He goes through the sins of lust, anger, covetousness, injustice, irreligion, and the rest, showing that the spring of all their manifestations is in the heart. The evil eye of which He speaks seems to be that envious malignant way of regarding others, of which we have an instance in His own Parable of the Husbandmen in the Vineyard, where the same expression is used, 'Is thy eye evil, because I am good?' The foolishness with which the catalogue is concluded, seems to be the sin which is called foolishness in Sacred Scripture, that is, infidelity, the practical denial of God. But though there may be no great need for comment on the words of our Lord taken singly, it is surely remarkable that He should pour forth, as it were, so long a list of the evils which are nurtured in the heart of man, as if it were a familiar thought to Him, how much God was continually being offended in the heart. Nor does He add the qualification which might have been added, of the immense glory to God that may be given by the heart, which is capable of so much, in thought and intention and aspiration, which may delight the Heart of God. For in this place our Lord is strictly confining Himself to the direct doctrine, that the guiltiness or innocence of man must depend on the heart, only so far as He is engaged in explaining what He had said to the multitudes about the things that defile a man.

The whole incident of which we are speaking, as well as the narrative of it by the two first Evangelists, is full of matter for reflection and instruction. It is remarkable, how our Lord turned on His accusers, and made their attack on His disciples an occasion for their own confusion, while at the same time it afforded them some

most wholesome instruction and warning. Such persons are always fastening on small and technical points, as they may be called, in the system of our Lord and of the Church, and it seems as if He meant us to understand that those who indulge in this temper of criticism are sure to be guilty themselves of grave violations of far higher laws than those in defence of which they pretend to speak. We see this spirit in the cavils of Protestants and others, who are always endeavouring to found attacks on the Church on minor and remote points, while they themselves are breaking the first and most important of laws, in their obstinate rebellion and their teaching of heresy. Another point in which this incident is remarkable, in the onward course of our Lord's teaching, is the way in which He took the opportunity of the objection of His critics to lay down a principle which was to be of immense service to the Church in her struggle against the exclusive and national temper of the Jews. We have already referred to the vision of St. Peter, before he was sent to receive Cornelius and his friends into the Christian fold. Our Lord's words must often have come to the mind of the Apostles in the controversies which followed. It is also worthy of note, that He did not explain the principle which He laid down to the multitudes, but at the same time He explained it to His Apostles, who were hereafter to have the office of applying it in practice in the arrangements for the Gentile Churches.

In the last place, the manner in which this incident is related by St. Matthew and St. Mark is very instructive, as furnishing an instance of the characteristics of these two Evangelists. The respective narratives show how entirely independent is St. Mark in his account, at the very time that here also, as in the rest of his Gospel generally, he might seem almost to be a copyist or

an abbreviator of St. Matthew. St. Matthew would probably have inserted the incident, both on account of its importance in the development of the animosity against our Lord on the part of the Jewish authorities, and also because, when his Gospel was written, the Apostles had every need to justify their own methods, as to the question of ceremonial defilement and the like, by the direct words and example of their Master. But St. Matthew would write, as he always writes, most concisely and summarily, and he would not add the explanations of the Jewish customs which were referred to, such explanations being altogether needless for those for whom he immediately wrote. This accounts for the difference between the two Evangelists in the opening verses of their narratives. St. Mark adds the explanation about the customs of the Jews which his own readers would require.

The two Evangelists both give us the quotation from the Prophet Isaias which our Lord applied so severely to the case of these critics of His own, but the quotation is in a different place in St. Mark from that which it occupies in St. Matthew. In such cases it is usually safe to follow St. Mark rather than St. Matthew, for the first Evangelist is very much led, in his arrangements of matter, by the order of ideas, and in this case, the answer of our Lord, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition?' which is placed by St. Matthew at the very beginning of the words of our Lord, corresponds very exactly with the objection which He is answering, 'Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients?' An examination of the two reports furnishes us with the reason why St. Matthew might have transposed the quotation, placing it at the end of the reply of our Lord, in which He would be correct as an historian, for it was only

necessary for him to relate what our Lord said, not the exact order in which He said it. But as St. Matthew had omitted to insert any explanation such as that given us by St. Mark, concerning the customs of the Jews in their frequent washings, he was consistent in leaving out what our Lord said to them about these washings. Yet it seems that what our Lord said on this subject, as recorded by St. Mark, grows naturally out of the quotation from Isaias, which ends by speaking of the commandments of men. This part of the quotation our Lord seems to have illustrated at once, by speaking of their washings of cups and pots and the like. These observances He calls 'leaving the commandments of God' and holding the tradition of men. Then, in the second place, our Lord goes on to reproach them with something far worse, with not only leaving the commandments of God but with transgressing those commandments, that they may keep their own tradition. Then follows the charge about the Corban. This charge St. Matthew gives and not the other, and then he subjoins the quotation from the Prophet, a kind of witness which he never omits when it is possible to insert it. It thus appears most probable, that St. Mark, as usual, is correct in point of time and order, while St. Matthew has reasons of his own for departing from the order of time.

The other difference in the two narratives is still more easy of explanation. St. Mark inserts the words of our Lord about the scandal of the Pharisees, and the remark of the disciples which led to these words. St. Matthew leaves both out. It is not that St. Matthew is particularly tender in his accounts of the Pharisees, but that as he wrote for the Jews of Jerusalem who had become Christians, he might not see any necessity for multiplying these notes of our Lord's attacks on them, especially as he was about to give, almost at the end

of his history of our Lord's actions before the Passion, the long and vehement denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees in which their case was summed up by our Lord before He concluded His teaching. But it is probable that at the time at which St. Matthew compiled his Gospel, the difference between the better Jews and the growing Church was not altogether a gulf which could not be occasionally bridged over. St. Gamaliel and many of his disciples became Christians, and it is probable that the number of conversions always going on was not small. We see the state of things a little later, when St. Paul could divide the whole Sanhedrin in his own favour, by declaring that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. Thus the mention of the remarks of our Lord on them would be at once superfluous and irritating, unless there was some cogent reason for it, as in the case of the denunciation by our Lord to which we have referred, and which St. Matthew gives.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Syrophaenician Woman.

St. Matt. xv. 21—28 ; St. Mark vii. 24—30 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 76.

AT the period of the Life of our Lord with which we are now dealing, it is almost the rule that we find Him rapidly changing His place of abode, passing suddenly and at short intervals from one part of Galilee and of the neighbouring regions to another part, staying but a brief time anywhere, and altogether conducting Himself like one who is chiefly desirous of avoiding notice wherever he may be. This line of conduct has already been explained more than once. Our Lord was avoiding any conflict with His bitter enemies until the time preordained for such a conflict should have come. On the other hand, His enemies would not leave Him alone. The presence in Galilee of the emissaries of the chief priests of Jerusalem, of which we have had evidence in the preceding chapter, sufficiently proves this.

Our remarks in the last chapter may explain the facts. It is highly probable that they had been expecting Him at Jerusalem for the feast of the Pasch. When He did not appear, they probably made inquiries concerning Him, either from the Galilean pilgrims or others more entirely devoted to their interests. Finding that He was still actively teaching, they sent some of their own body down to the scene of His preaching, with the object of watching Him and, if possible, of destroying Him. Our Lord had also lately taken more than

one great step in advance in the development of His system of preaching and of His doctrine. He had sent out the Twelve in pairs, and His name had thus become, more than ever, common and famous in the estimation of the people. He had also worked the most remarkable, in a certain sense, of all His miracles. The miracle of the multiplication of the loaves was not in itself so great a wonder as the raising of the widow's son or the daughter of Jairus from the dead. But it was more conspicuous, more wide in the range of the benefits which it conferred, and more closely resembling the great historical miracle of the Old Testament. This was enough to make it clear to us that our Lord was not in any way cowed by the determined opposition with which He now met, but that He was retiring, for purposes of His own wisdom, in order to prepare for a more bold and enlarged manner of operation when the due time came.

But we are now dealing with this period of comparative retirement on the part of our Lord, and there belong to it a certain small number of most remarkable miracles, the record of which we owe, like that of the dispute mentioned in the last chapter, to the faithful memories of St. Matthew and of St. Peter, using the hand of his spiritual child St. Mark. Both the Evangelists tell us that after the dispute about traditions our Lord withdrew almost completely from the Holy Land itself. 'And Jesus went from thence, and retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. Rising from thence He went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.' He would there be where His enemies were not likely to follow Him, and where He might devote Himself quietly to the further formation and instruction of His Apostles. The incident which follows shows us how far His name was known, even among those who were not of the

chosen people. The story must be made up of the two accounts of the two first Evangelists, and here also we shall see how carefully and importantly the second of the two supplements the narrative of the first, leaving out some things that St. Matthew had said, and adding others which he had omitted. Putting the two narratives together, we gain a perfect view of the whole incident. We begin with the narrative of St. Matthew. 'And behold, a woman of Canaan, who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to Him, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.' They must have been in the public road or street, and our Lord could not yet have entered into the house of which St. Mark speaks. Our Lord seemed to take no notice of the cry of this poor mother. 'Who answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.'

This, then, is the first stage in this beautiful incident. The woman has caught the knowledge concerning Him which was common among the people, and she must have had some knowledge Who the Son of David was. The commentators see in her words the full confession both of His Divine Person, and of His Human Nature. The name 'Lord' signifies the Godhead, and the title of the Son of David belongs to Him as the Incarnate Son Who has taken flesh of the seed of David, according to the promises. If the disciples knew the intention of our Lord to be to seek a place where He might not be known, they would naturally be annoyed at the importunity of the woman, and they were probably not well inclined to take her side, on account of her Gentile origin. So their only thought was that she might be got rid of, rather than that she should continue crying after the party, and drawing the attention of the by-

standers to them. The answer which our Lord gave them explained His silence. 'I am not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.'

Then, as it appears, He went into a house, for the purpose of avoiding the publicity occasioned by the woman's cries. Here the account of St. Mark begins. He gives the purpose of our Lord in the first instance. 'Entering into a house, He would that no man should know it, and He could not be hid.' The woman evidently followed Him boldly into the house. 'For a woman, as soon as she heard of Him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, came in, and fell down at His feet. For the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophœnician born. And she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.' Here St. Matthew again joins the story as it is in St. Mark. After the answer given by our Lord to His Apostles, about His Mission to the Jews exclusively, the Evangelist adds: 'But she came and adored Him, saying, Lord, help me.' Our Lord's answer is given partly by one of the Evangelists and partly by the other. 'Who answering, said to her, Suffer first the children to be filled, for it is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs.'

She has made some progress in her faith, by her perseverance. For now in the house she has not only made her way to Him, but she has cast herself at His sacred feet, and adored Him as her God. She has gained a little in her prayer, for it is not now simply for mercy, but for help, the help which comes after pardon has been granted. Still more, she has gained by His giving her an answer, instead of continuing in His perfect silence. And the words which He utters are not such as to shut out all hope. For He speaks as if the turn of the Gentiles was to come. She is to suffer the children to

be filled first, and then perhaps there may be something left for others. The bread of the children, which must not be cast to the dogs, is the saving doctrine of our Lord and the miracles by which that doctrine was authenticated and accompanied. First He said He had no business with such as her, and now He says that those to whom He was directly sent must be helped first. And yet her pride might have been wounded to the quick, by the epithet of dogs which He applies to her own race and nation, and thus His gradual change from severity to graciousness is as yet but partially accomplished.

But the faith and humility of this good woman were not unequal to the trial to which they were thus put by our Lord. 'But she answered and said to Him, Yea, Lord, for the whelps also under the table eat of the crumbs of the children, of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.' The answer sounds like a smart retort, a kind of clever witticism, turning the argument contained in our Lord's words against itself. But we may be sure that nothing of such a kind would have received the great favour which this answer drew from our Lord. It was, in the first place, a most humble answer, for in it she seemed to accept the position which His words assigned to such as she was, the position of dogs in comparison to the children. This was no slight humility for a Gentile, for the whole Gentile world looked down with scorn on the Jews. In the next place, the answer shows great patience and perseverance, and she calls Him again Lord, repeating her profession of faith either in His Divine power, or at least, in His Divine Mission. And in the third place, this answer shows a deep insight into the ways and counsels of God. It implies that though He may treat some as His children, and so with greater favour than others, still

all belong to Him in a manner, and are inmates and members of His household and His family, as the masters are not without care, even for the whelps under the table. The Gentiles may be in an inferior position to the Jews, but they still belong to God, as St. Paul says, 'Is He not the God of the Gentiles also?' In this truth is included the whole doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God, and of the necessary inclusion, in any great counsel of His mercy, of the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Again, the words of the woman of which we are speaking imply that the miraculous favours of which the world was now so full were great indeed in the benefits which they conveyed, but not any great exertions, so to say, for the power of Him by Whom they were wrought. They were but as crumbs of bread falling from the table of the masters. They were the merest trifles, in comparison to His power in working them. So she has grown in her faith, even since she first made her petition to our Lord, and the repetition and urgency with which she prays against what might certainly look like great discouragement, must have had a great power in moving the compassionate Heart of our Lord. She had answered most faithfully to the intentions of His Heart in trying her so long, and now she was to receive the full reward of her faith in a boon which was greater than what she had dared to ask at first. She had also become, in a measure, the teacher and instructor even of the Apostles themselves in the art of successful prayer, and her example was to be handed on in the Church of God for the edification of others, as long as the world was to last.

'Then Jesus answering said to her, O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt. For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter.

And her daughter was cured from that hour. But when she was come into her house, she found the girl lying upon the bed, and that the devil was gone out.' Our Lord, then, specially commended the greatness of her faith. His words are a kind of echo of what He had said in the case of the Gentile centurion of Capharnaum, that He had not found so great faith in Israel. The greatness of faith in that case had consisted in the readiness of the centurion to believe that our Lord could heal at a distance, as well as when He was present, which was just the point of faith which He had before elicited, with some difficulty, from the nobleman, probably the friend of the centurion, whose son had been healed in the previous year. In the case of the Syrophœnician woman, the greatness of faith which is praised and rewarded by our Lord is her penetration of the indefectible goodness of God towards all, whether in covenant with Him or not, whether of the chosen race of Israel or of the outcasts of heathenism, and also in her keen intelligence of the intention of our Lord Himself, in provoking the most persevering prayer in order that He might finally reward it. She understood that each rebuff she met with was meant to lead her on in the urgency of her petitions, and that when our Lord objected to helping her, it was but with the design of making her more worthy of His help. Thus faith had become in her a kind of holy instinct, supplying the place of long reasonings and theological arguments, which might have shown that our Lord's Mission could not be more than formally confined to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Thus she had been able to divine the truth that rose to the lips of St. Peter, when he spoke to Cornelius and his friends, after his own vision at Joppa, 'In very deed I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in

every nation he that feareth Him and worketh justice is acceptable to Him,' and which made him, when the Holy Ghost had fallen on that devout company of heathen, conclude, by a simple process of natural reason, that it was impossible to refuse baptism to those who had received the Holy Ghost as well as the Apostles themselves and the faithful among the Jews.¹ And we cannot doubt that, in the controversies which followed on the admission of the Gentiles to the Church, this anecdote of the Canaanitish woman was not forgotten by those who argued on the side of the Gospel liberties. Indeed, it seems almost necessary that there should have been some such instance in the Life of our Lord Himself, to counterbalance and explain the precedent which He had set of a kind of temporary exclusiveness, by His prohibition to the Apostles to preach among the heathen, or to the Samaritans, when He sent them forth on their first missionary excursion. Thus the whole incident, so accidental, as it seems, appears to have been arranged by a Divine forethought, using the necessity which compelled our Lord to take refuge among a Gentile population for the declaration of a great principle of immense importance in His Kingdom.

¹ Acts x. 34, 35.

CHAPTER XV.

The Deaf and Dumb healed.

St. Mark vii. 31—37; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 77.

WE are not told how long our Lord remained in the place where He had delivered the daughter of the Syrophœnician woman, but it is not likely that He lingered there, inasmuch as the miracle must have made Him an object of general curiosity among her neighbours. The Evangelists do not say that she was commanded to keep the deliverance of her child a secret, and this makes it still more probable that our Lord went away at once. His course now lay, as far as we can gather, along the extreme northern skirts of Galilee, passing from the sea-coast towards the interior of the country, and crossing the Jordan high up above the place where it entered into the Lake. The region of Decapolis, into which He now passed, lay on either side of the stream, and He could pass at will to either side of the Lake if He chose to turn His steps southwards.

This Decapolis has already been mentioned by St. Mark, who is our only authority for the miracle of which we are now to speak, as being the country of the man who had been delivered from the legion of devils by our Lord, when He had crossed the Lake from Capharnaum, after having finished His first series of parables. This poor man had implored our Lord to be allowed to join himself to the holy band which accompanied Him. Our

Lord had refused him the permission, and had told him to go to his home and his friends, and tell them how great things God had done for him. 'He went his way,' St. Mark tells us, 'and began to publish in Decapolis how great things God had done for him, and all men wondered.' Thus our Lord had prepared for Himself a herald for His short visit to this outlying district on the present occasion, though here also His chief object seems to have been to keep Himself concealed. But his efforts were in great measure in vain.

We owe our knowledge of this miracle, as has been said, entirely to St. Mark, that is to St. Peter. It is the same with the account of one other of the few miracles of this period, of which we shall presently have to speak. There is a carefulness and minuteness of detail about these short narratives, which give them a charm of their own, and suggest to us the thought that it is highly probable that, if it were possible for us to have the accounts of the almost innumerable miracles wrought by our Lord in anything of the same kind of detail, we should find something special and particular in the narrative of each, which might contain great and beautiful instruction for us. The time of which we are now speaking was a time when our Lord was keeping Himself back from the public gaze, and it was perhaps for this reason that those whom He did heal on such occasions as the present came to Him singly, and so received from Him that special attention and delicacy of treatment, according to their peculiar needs or states of mind, which those who came to Him in large companies could not enjoy. In any case, this feature in these miracles is that on which we naturally fasten, in our considerations concerning them. Let us hear the account of the present miracle as it is given us by St. Mark.

'And again, going out of the coasts of Tyre, He came

by Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb. And they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him. And taking him apart from the multitude, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue, and looking up to Heaven, He groaned, and said to him, Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And He charged them that they should tell no man. But the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it. And they said, He hath done all things well; He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.'

It is the case with all these miracles, that the persons to be benefited are brought by others to our Lord, in distinction from many who appeal to Him for themselves. It may be supposed that miracles follow the rule which obtains as to prayer generally, that is, that God will often listen to us more readily when we pray for ourselves, than for others, because our prayer is in itself a disposition which fits us for the bestowal of His mercy, and this disposition may not always exist in those for whom others pray. The account of the Syrophœnician mother, of which we last spoke, may be considered as a perfect representation of the manner and method of persevering and prevailing prayer, when there may even be some impediment in the person for whom the prayer is made. In that case the impediment was external and involuntary, namely, that the person prayed for was a Gentile. Some such impediments are not always overcome, inasmuch as it may require, especially in the case of spiritual or moral boons, that the freewill of the person prayed for should be not opposed to the attainment of the petition. But if we are to look to any one

of those who won boons for others as our model in the method of such triumphant prayer, we could perhaps hardly find a better model than that poor heathen mother, who almost forced our Lord to grant her prayer for her daughter.

In the present case, the lesson that is set before us is rather as to the steps by which a grace is conceded by our Lord and the cure brought home to the soul or even to the body. This has furnished an occasion for many devout commentaries on the part of the Christian writers. We may take as an instance the manner in which this cure is commented on by Ludolphus. In the first place, he says, it is required for salvation that the sinner should be brought to our Lord. This is done in many ways. Sometimes it is by the power of preaching, sometimes by chastisement in the way of sickness, especially when there is fear of death. Sometimes it is by the example of another, who corrects his own former life. Sometimes it is done by the giving of alms. Sometimes it is by the leading of the person's own conscience. In the second place, our Lord is asked to heal the sinner. For the salvation of a man is often obtained from God by the intercession of the saints. For God desires that we should ask Him, though He desires of Himself to grant the prayer. Thirdly, the sick man is separated from the crowd. This is done when God, in the process of justification, separates the wicked man from the society of evil livers, or calls him away and withdraws him from his habits of evil. For, as St. Jerome says, he that deserves to be healed is always withdrawn from disturbing thoughts, inordinate actions, and unregulated discourses, as one who is led out of a crowd. Here we have a lesson for penitents, to withdraw themselves from the bad society of worldly men. And, as not all whom God leads to penitence can retire from the crowd by bodily flight,

they must at least do this by the flight of the mind, and this is sufficient for salvation.

In the fourth place, our Saviour puts His fingers into the ears of the sinner, and this is done when God infuses into him the consideration of his sins, as if he saw all his sins written in his heart by the finger of God. Fifthly, our Saviour touches the tongue of the sinner by His spittle, and this takes place when He instructs him for confession. Confession rightly follows on the knowledge of the true state of the soul, infused into the ears by God. Confession is threefold, the confession of sins, the confession of faith, and the confession of the praise of God. In the sixth place, our Saviour looks up to Heaven, thus teaching the converted sinner to raise up the eyes of his intention and desire to heavenly things. For what good is it to have been delivered from earthly things, if the soul is not elevated to Heaven? In the seventh place, our Saviour groans over the healing of the sick man, teaching us thereby that we ought to groan over our tarrying in our present state of misery, as David did. Then, after these seven preliminary acts, our Saviour last of all said the word, Ephpheta, as if thereby to give him full absolution both from guilt and from pain.

It is only natural that many interpretations should have suggested themselves of the details of our Lord's action in this miracle, especially in the most prominent and unusual features of His conduct, such as the application of His fingers to the ears of the afflicted person, and the like, and also the groan which He is said to have uttered before performing the miracle. The first feature has been explained as signifying the instrumental character of the Sacred Humanity of our Lord in the healing of the ills of mankind, whether physical or moral. The groan may have various significations. It may

simply represent the intensity and fervour of prayer. It may represent the prospect of the endless miseries entailed on the human race by sin, which brought death into the world, and all other physical miseries short of death, and leading up to it, of which the infirmities under which this poor man laboured might be taken as typical specimens. It may represent the pain at which the redemption of the world from the consequences of sin was to be wrought out in the Passion of our Lord. It may represent the misery of the sins which have been and can be committed by the senses in the use of which this sufferer was deficient, senses given to man for the noble purpose that he should glorify his Maker thereby. Thus our Lord may have had present to His mind, as He had in the Agony in the Garden, the specific offences against God of which the senses of hearing and speaking were to be the instruments, and the danger which might accompany the restoration of the gift of their free use in this particular case. All the misery which made the redemption of the world necessary, all that that redemption would cost, all the sins for which the Redeemer would have to atone, and the little profit that was to follow from His sufferings in particular cases, might form the subject of grief to our Lord, and might be expressed by this groan.

The cure of this poor man was instantaneous and complete. In the case of the absence of the faculty of hearing, there will always be a great difficulty in the use of the faculty of speech, and when such faculties are recovered naturally, after having been paralyzed by disease for some time, it is usual for the full use of them to return only after an interval of practice and exercise. The miraculous character of the cure is therefore attested by the suddenness and completeness of the recovery of the use of the faculties. Thus it is well to remember that

there was here, therefore, a double miracle, in the restoration of the faculties themselves, and in that of their easy use, just as there was a double miracle when our Lord stilled the tempest on the Lake, and there was immediately a great calm, which could not have followed at once naturally.

Our Lord had more reasons than one for desiring that the miracle should not be made known. In the first place, there was His own continual practice of humility, the hiding, when it was possible to hide, the great powers which He had exercised, unless there was some positive reason for their being made known. Moreover, in the present case He was seeking to remain hidden for reasons of His own Divine prudence, and He was in that part of the country for that special purpose. 'And He charged them that they should tell no man.' But the charge is considered by many of the commentators as the expression of humility, a charge which those to whom it was given might disobey without serious sin. 'But the more He charged them, so much the more did they publish it, and so much the more did they wonder, saying, He hath done all things well, He hath made both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak.' It seems as if the Evangelist dwelt in mind on the manner in which the avoidance of vain glory and the study of humility makes men meet with all the greater commendation, as if a matter which, under ordinary circumstances, might have become gradually and slowly known, had been swiftly and widely propagated on account of the earnest entreaties of our Lord that it should remain entirely hidden from men. The details of the miracle, as well as the cure itself, were spread abroad, and probably all the beautiful and significant actions which had occurred in the course of our Lord's dealings with the sufferer, the leading him apart,

the putting of His fingers into his ears, the touching his tongue with His own spittle, the looking up to Heaven and the groaning, all were enumerated and made matters of praise, as having each one its own proper meaning and its own marvellous effect. For by one action He had made the deaf to hear, and by another the dumb to speak, and the effect had followed perfectly and swiftly in each case. It was no more exertion for our Lord's Divine power to work these two cures at the same time than to work them separately. But men are always extremely unready to believe in the goodness and the power of God, and thus it was a matter of great wonder to them that having made the deaf hear, He had also made the dumb to speak.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Feeding of the Four Thousand.

St. Matt. xv. 29—39; St. Mark viii. 1—10; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 78.

THE miracle which has just been spoken of was probably wrought by our Lord as He passed through the region of Decapolis on His way to the scene of that of which we are now to speak. It is not the custom of St. Mark, who is the only Evangelist who relates the miracle of the Ephpheta, to dwell with great care on the spots of the incidents of which he speaks. He mentions here the presence of a multitude, from which the subject of the miraculous cure was withdrawn by our Lord before the cure itself was wrought. Although we find that a multitude was present at the great miracle of the second multiplication of the loaves, this is not enough to make it certain that it was on the same spot that these two miracles took place, and it does not seem likely that our Lord would act so differently in the case of this single person, and in the case of all the rest of the subjects of His miracles at this time. We suppose therefore that He passed on from the place where He had cured the deaf and dumb person, just mentioned, until He came to the spot on which the second miraculous feeding was to be wrought, which seems to have been in the same part as the scene of the former miracle of the same kind. St. Matthew speaks of it as 'the' mountain, as if it was a well-known place, perhaps the scene of some

other of the great incidents in our Lord's Life, whether before or after the Resurrection. This Evangelist begins his account by a summary mention of this journey of our Lord from the parts of Tyre and Sidon, where He had delivered the daughter of the Syrophœnician woman from the devil in answer to her importunate prayer and wonderful faith.

‘And when Jesus had passed away from thence, He came nigh to the sea of Galilee, and going up into a mountain, or the mountain, He sat there,’ that is, He remained there for a short time. ‘And there came to Him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at His feet, and He healed them. So that the multitudes marvelled, seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see, and they glorified the God of Israel.’ It is quite possible that this multitude may have been from very different parts of the country from those which had furnished the crowds who had been present near the same spot on the former occasion of the multiplication of the loaves. In that case they seem to have come in great part from the other side of the lake, or the parts in which our Lord was well known, though He had been absent from them for some months, or at least for many weeks. It had now become so habitual with Him to retire from the ordinary scenes of His preaching and working of miracles, on account of the persecution which so continually haunted His footsteps, that whenever it was known that He had appeared near these familiar spots, the people would naturally gather in crowds to avail themselves of the benefits of His presence. Thus, in the account of the former miracle we have it distinctly mentioned that the people came over the lake to Him in boats, while others made a circuit by land to reach the spot where He was.

On this occasion the crowds gathered together may probably have come from the towns of Decapolis itself, and others in the neighbourhood. Their minds may have been prepared for our Lord's beneficence by the narrative of the man out of whom He had cast the legion of devils. If this is the case, they would have been a simple, ignorant population, composed in some large proportion of Gentiles, living in the midst of Jews, on the very outskirts of the Holy Land. This is made more probable by the fact that there is no mention in the account of this miracle of any teaching of our Lord, but only of His miraculous cures. And at the end of the account we are told by St. Matthew that they glorified the God of Israel, as if they were not all of the chosen people themselves. If this be so, we may see a kind of family character about the miracles of this period. They begin with the importunate mother, the Syrophœnician woman, whom our Lord at first will not listen to, because she is not of the house of Israel. She is the first to break down the wall of partition, as it were, of which we have mention in the Epistles of St. Paul. We cannot tell how many of the persons healed on the present occasion were simply Gentiles, but we know that the population of that part was largely mixed, and therefore it is probable that there were many such among the objects of our Lord's mercy. It would probably have been mentioned by the Evangelists if the persons cured, of whom special mention is made, the deaf and dumb man, of whose cure we lately spoke, and the blind man healed at Bethsaida, of whom we shall speak presently, had been Gentiles. But perhaps the comparative difficulty, at least the comparative labour, of our Lord in working these cures may have had some connection with the deficient faith or ignorance of the populations among whom His course now for a time lay. It is certain that

we do not find all these circumstances mentioned in other parts of the Gospel history.

‘And Jesus called together His disciples, when there was a great multitude and had nothing to eat. Calling His disciples together, He saith to them, I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days and have not what to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their homes, they will faint by the way, for some of them came from afar off.’ It may very well have been in the mind of our Lord to repeat the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves at a short interval, for the sake of the great doctrine with which, as we have seen, it was connected, and thus His prudence in regulating the gradual disclosure of His great purposes and mysteries to His disciples and others may have come to the aid, so to say, of the intense tenderness of His compassionate Heart. It is certain that the miracle in this case, as in the other, was unsolicited, mainly for the reason that no one but Himself could have thought of such an excess of love, providing not only for the needs of the soul, and the diseases and the infirmities of the body, but also for possible sufferings of hunger, which might last for a short time, but which could not be very serious.

The greatest gifts of the free bounty of God are constantly those which are most unexpected and unasked for, for this very reason, that men cannot rise to the intelligence of the extreme mercifulness and compassion of their Creator and Father, as if the whole of the creation and government of the world were not a simple act of munificence on His part, proceeding from no necessity to Him, and carried on at no gain whatever to Him. Even the disciples do not seem to have risen to the height of the comprehension of what He had it in His mind to do, although we do not read on this

occasion, as on the former occasion, that they came of themselves to suggest to our Lord to send the multitudes away. They only say, after He has spoken to them of His own intention, that it will be difficult to feed them all in the wilderness, difficult, that is, in any ordinary manner, though not difficult to the immense mercy and power of God of which they had had so much experience in the series of His miracles. 'And His disciples answered Him, Whence can any one fill them here with bread in the desert? Whence, then, should we have so many loaves in the desert as to fill so great a multitude?' There is nothing about going into the villages round about, and buying bread for so many hundred pence. We may suppose, therefore, that they had not quite forgotten the former miracle, though they had not the confidence to answer Him plainly, 'Lord, give them to eat.'

'And Jesus said to them, How many loaves have you? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. And He commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground.' There is no mention now of the green grass, though the spot appears to have been nearly, if not actually, the same with the scene of the former miracle. For the season had now advanced towards the beginning of our summer, as it seems, and the heat of the sun's rays would have dried up the herbage. 'And taking the seven loaves and the fishes and giving thanks, He brake, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples gave and set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before the multitude. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up of that which was left of the fragments seven baskets full. And they that had eaten were about four thousand men, beside women and children. And He sent them away.'

The circumstances of the miracle are almost identical with those of the former miracle. There is the same orderly arrangement of the people, the same solemn act of thanksgiving, and then of breaking the bread, the same use of the disciples as the ministers to the people of the multiplied food, and the same abundant and copious remainder after the four thousand men, beside women and children, had taken their fill. There is nothing here about the people consulting together to take our Lord by force and make Him a King. But our Lord is evidently anxious to send them away speedily, and He Himself leaves at once the scene of the miracle with His disciples, and sails to the other side of the lake to a part which the two Evangelists call by a different name. St. Matthew speaks of it as the coasts of Magedan, and St. Mark as the parts of Dalmanutha. It must be supposed that the part of the country must have been called indifferently by one name or by the other.

A few remarks may be added by way of comparison of this miracle with the other which it so much resembles. Like as the two are, there is yet an individuality about each of them. The first great feeding of the multitudes may be considered as having been wrought especially with a view to the doctrine which it was intended to introduce. Like the miracle at Cana, also a miracle of great sacramental import, it was worked under circumstances of comparatively small necessity. The people were not far from their homes, there were villages in the neighbourhood to which they might have gone to furnish themselves with food, and they had only been the greater part of a single day with our Lord. The circumstances were planned by our Lord with a view to the doctrine which was to follow. It was not very difficult for the audience, or a considerable part of them, to find their way

to the synagogue of Capharnaum. The impression produced was probably greater, as it was the first occasion of any such wonder. The second miracle of feeding is rather more the miracle of the Providential care of God than of the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament. The people abandon themselves to our Lord. They forget their own wants. Our Lord shows the most tender care and forethought for them. The Apostles do not come to Him, as on the former occasion, to ask Him to send the people away. He calls them to Him and speaks of the needs of the multitude, of their faithfulness in remaining with Him so long, of their having come from far, of the danger of their fainting by the way. He shows the tenderest knowledge and consideration of all their wants and possible sufferings, and He supplies them all out of the abundance of His compassion.

Again, the repetition of the miracle seems not to have been without a deliberate design on the part of our Lord with regard to His own disciples. He seems to have made the second occasion a kind of trial of their confidence in Him. It seems as if He expected them to suggest that what He had done before He should do again. The marvel of the feeding of the faithful on the Body and Blood of our Lord was to be in the Church a daily marvel, repeated all over the world. It seems as if the miracle which was to resemble it in so many particulars was meant by our Lord to have some kind of resemblance to it in this respect, by being twice repeated within a very short number of weeks, and that He wished His disciples to look on the power which He had already once exercised as not likely to be left unexercised on other occasions. It seems almost strange to us that the people who witnessed the first miracle of the loaves, were almost led by it to hope for a renewal

of the daily showers of manna, and yet that the disciples on this second occasion of the presence of a great and famished multitude did not anticipate the renewal of the miracle in their favour. But so it is, in our petty appreciations of the goodness and power of God. He means one great favour to be the spur to the prayer and confidence which may win from Him a succession of others, as great, or greater, but we think it rather a reason that we should not expect favours, that we have had them granted before.

This second miracle of the multiplication of the loaves is valuable to us incidentally in the explanation and intelligence of the several Gospel narratives. It is quite certain that, if this miracle of the feeding of the four thousand had been mentioned by one Evangelist only, and the other of the feeding of the five thousand by another Evangelist only, there would have been a large number of critics on the New Testament who would have maintained as an undoubted and evident truth that they were but different versions of one and the same event. They would have treated with scorn any defenders of the perfect literal accuracy of the Sacred Text, who might have argued from the difference in the numbers of the people fed, of the loaves, and of the basketsful of fragments, besides other points, that the miracle was in truth wrought twice over. As it happens, the fact that these two miracles are both of them related by two Evangelists as having occurred at different times, shows us, beyond the possibility of cavil, that all these criticisms are founded on a false estimate of the accuracy of the Sacred Texts. No one who claims to be a Christian and Catholic student ventures to deny that there were two miracles of the loaves. But unfortunately the principles of criticism on the text of the Gospels on which such false conclusions are based,

are still applied on other occasions to difficulties in the Harmony of the Evangelists by no means different in character from this.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Leaven of the Pharisees.

St. Matt. xvi. 1—12 ; St. Mark viii. 11—21 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 79.

It would almost appear that the enemies of our Lord must have had some very watchful spies, who informed them of all His movements, for we are told that, immediately on His landing, they were themselves ready to beset Him again with their questions and cavils. The place at which He landed was probably not far from Capharnaum. It was apparently a small town, or a spot on the shore between two small towns. Nevertheless, He seems to have found them ready for Him. ‘And there came to Him, the Pharisees and the Sadducees tempting, and the Pharisees came forth,’ as if they had been lying in wait, ‘and began to question with Him, and they asked Him to show them a sign from Heaven, tempting Him.’ This asking for a sign was in the first instance a practical denial that He had hitherto proved His Mission by any such evidence. It was therefore an ignoring or a denial of the whole long and multifarious array of evidences, which the Providence of the Father had heaped up for the conversion of the people. It was a declaration that they were not yet satisfied, that they must have something more than had yet been given, or, at the very least, that no one could be expected to take the word or the

witness of others, on the point of the evidences which were to be considered sufficient to produce conviction in the case of a messenger sent by God, whose mission was authenticated by miraculous signs. There is something of this in the refusal, after the Resurrection, of St. Thomas to believe on the report of the other Apostles, unless he had himself the particular proof which he chose to insist on. These men were self-appointed inquisitors, and they assumed a kind of official right to dictate their own terms, and ask for whatever evidence they might choose to name. The evidence on which in this case, as before, they insisted, was a sign from Heaven.

It has been supposed, on account of the wording of the demand, 'a sign from Heaven,' that they meant to imply that there was something defective and suspicious in the evidence of all of the many signs which had already been wrought by our Lord on the ground that they were signs on the earth. The ground of this objection has been thought to be, that the earth was more the permitted sphere of the agency of evil spirits, or of the action of wizards and witches, and the like, while the Heaven above was free from such influences, as being peculiarly the realm reserved to Himself by God. There may be another meaning in the demand of a sign from Heaven, namely, that they wished for a sign that should be a sign and nothing more, such as the standing still of the sun in the days of Josue, the fire from heaven called down by Elias, the thunder in the time of the year when thunder was unusual in the days of Samuel, or the going back of the shadow on the dial in the days of Achaz. Perhaps also they may have heard of the miraculous feeding of the multitudes, and may have meant to ask for something like the giving of the manna from Heaven, which had been suggested

to the minds of the people who had been the witnesses of the first miracle of the same kind not so long before.

In any case, it is clear from our Lord's answer and method of dealing with them, that the question and demand were made in a captious and hostile spirit, that He felt bound not to submit to their dictation, and saw no profit that could follow from his yielding to their request. The answer which He gave to them was comparatively gentle, for He reasoned with them, as it seemed, from their own habitual practice of interpreting, by the results of experience, the signs of the weather, which were familiar to all, and He implied that if they would have paid the same amount of attention to the plain and notorious phenomena of the times in which they lived, they would have had no need for any further evidence as to the truth of His Mission. 'But He answered and said to them, When it is evening, you say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, To-day there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering. You know then how to discern the face of the sky, and can you not know the signs of the times?'

The argument by which they are thus convicted is plain. Men have only to apply to the study of the signs of God's action and the intimations of His will, as to spiritual and religious matters, the same diligence and practical common sense which they are continually using with regard to matters of daily life and experience, and they will have no difficulty in reading the signs in the one case, as easily as in the other. The principle laid down in these words of our Lord is of universal application, and it will be the condemnation of thousands of cavillers against the Church in all ages, as well of these particular Pharisees and Sadducees from Jerusalem whom He thus confuted on the shores of the Lake of

Galilee. If God has so arranged the working of natural laws in the heavens, the clouds, the state of the atmosphere, and the like, that men are able by studying them and taking notes of their own experience, to predict, with a kind of certainty sufficient for the guidance of life, what the weather will be next day, it is not likely that He will leave men without abundant guidance as to the more important matters which belong to His service and the salvation of their own souls, if they will but attend to the intimations of His will with which He surrounds them. Some will attend, and be convinced, others will not attend at all, others will refuse to be convinced, even after attending.

On the other hand, nothing will convince men against their will, for God will not force them by the violation of their liberty. Nor will anything that God will do for them avail against the temper of indifference and inattention, which will give no heed to signs and warnings, however clear and manifest. Thus, there are men whom the whole magnificent system of the Christian and Catholic evidences never even approaches, in the way of practical influence on their minds. Their minds are altogether occupied with other things, trifles as they are, and they never take into consideration that system or any part of it. This utter heedlessness and childishness of mind is in itself enough to prevent the reception and consideration of the evidences of our Lord or of the Church, and it is often found in persons who are sharp, and quick, and painstaking in balancing evidence, as to matters of earthly interest, and thus those persons show that there is no want of capacity in them for serious thought on matters in which they recognize its importance. Their case reminds us of the words of our Lord about the children of this world being wiser in their generation than the children of light. But the

case is far worse than this when there is malice and a resolution not to look evidence in the face, not to give them the attention which they claim, to turn the mind away from them, lest the mind should have to tell the will that something, from which the whole man shrinks, is a duty which must be discharged. Thus there are men who follow the Catholic teaching as it gradually dawns upon them, just so far as is consistent with their earthly interest and position, but who resolutely shut their eyes from all examination of further points of the very same system of truth. The doctrine of the authority of the Church dawns on them, but they will not look at the doctrine of the unity of the Church. They will advance as far as what they think is the Real Presence, and go on joining in condemnations of Transubstantiation. Heedlessness is bad enough, but wilful heedlessness has a character and a condemnation of its own. All the more, when, as is often the case, these men, who have deliberately avoided entering on investigations for themselves, do not hesitate to guide others on the very same points of debate.

‘You know then how to discern the face of the sky, and can you not know the signs of the times?’ This, as far as we can gather, is all the direct answer our Lord now certainly made to these questioners. The words of His which are recorded by St. Mark, may have been said after He had left them, when He was alone with His disciples. ‘And sighing deeply in spirit, He saith, Why doth this generation ask a sign? Amen I say to you, if a sign shall be given to this generation. A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the Prophet. And leaving them, He went up again into the ship, and passed to the other side of the water. He left them and went away.’ The words here related about the

sign of the Prophet Jonas are a repetition of words which our Lord had used on the former occasion some months before this, when there had been the same demand for a sign from Heaven. It is not therefore certain that our Lord did not give the same answer on this occasion to the same people, although it is quite possible that, as has been said, He gave them no more answer than the remonstrance already related, and that the words about Jonas were said after He had quitted their company.

In any case the sense is plain. The generation of which He speaks was wicked and adulterous, whether that last word be understood of the spiritual adultery, which consists in infidelity to God, or of actual adultery, from the guilt of which, there is every reason for thinking that even the priests themselves were not free. The sign which was to be given them was that which had been predicted by the history of the Prophet Jonas, who had been, as our Lord said on the former occasion, for three days and nights in the belly of the whale. In the same way the Son of Man was to be for the same space of time in the grave, and His Resurrection to Life was to be the sign by the preaching of which the world was to be converted. Our Lord had had this sign in His mind from the very beginning of His Ministry, as we see from His words at the first Pasch which occurred after His Baptism, when, in answer to the inquiry, what sign He showed, seeing that He did such things as the cleansing of the Temple, He answered, ‘Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up,’ meaning by the phrase the same thing as that which was signified by the sign of Jonas, for as the Evangelist adds, He spoke of the Temple of His Body.¹ This sign these enemies of His were to bring about, and

¹ St. John ii. 21.

it may well have been that His deep sighing was occasioned by the thought of all the sin and malice which would be involved in its accomplishment.

It would seem as if the thought of the malice of His enemies, and the extreme mischief to their souls which would result therefrom, had remained in the mind of our Lord while He was embarking in the boat and passing over the lake. Thus it may have suggested the words from which the mistake of the disciples arose concerning the leaven. 'And when His disciples were come over the water, they had forgotten to take bread, and they had but one loaf with them in the ship.' The whole incident had been, it seems, full of hurry, our Lord not choosing to remain longer than was necessary in the neighbourhood, where He was exposed to such cavils as those of these Pharisees and Sadducees. Thus it had been that the disciples had neglected their usual business in providing some small amount of food for the company. They were no doubt mainly occupied with our Lord. Their hearts must have been full of fresh enthusiasm for Him after the late miracle, in which, notwithstanding the unbelief of so many, and the abandonment of Him by some even in the company of His usual followers, after the first miracle of the loaves, He had repeated it for the sake of refreshing the hunger of the four thousand, many of whom may very probably have been heathen.

The ordinary state of mind of the Apostles was probably one of great and joyous pre-occupation with the sayings and doings of their Master, and they had few cares and anxieties about temporal matters, as we find from the narratives of these incidents that their store was never very large. Still there were some among them who had more special charge regarding these necessary details, and it was their duty, as it might be that of the officials

in a religious community, to take care beforehand that there might be no want of what was needed when the time for the refecton of the body came. Thus, when our Lord began to speak of the thoughts which had occupied His Heart during the transit, 'Who said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees and of the leaven of Herod,' they took His words as a playful reproach to themselves. 'But they thought within themselves, and they reasoned among themselves, Because we have taken no bread!' There must have been some over-anxiety and trouble among them, as we judge from the reproach which our Lord made them for being so much disturbed. But it can hardly have been deeply inordinate. Our Lord proceeded at once, gently and lovingly, to admonish them about their want of perfect faith.

'And Jesus knowing it saith to them, Why do you think within yourselves, ye of little faith, for that you have no bread? Why do you reason, because you have no bread? Do you not yet understand? Have you still your heart blinded? Having eyes, see you not? And having ears, hear you not? Neither do you remember? Neither do you remember the five loaves among the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? When I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? They say to Him, Twelve. Nor the seven loaves among the four thousand, and how many baskets you took? When also the seven loaves among the four thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? They say to Him, Seven. And He said to them, How do you not yet understand? Why do you not understand that it was not concerning bread that I said to you, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees? Then they understood that He said, not

that they should beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'

We may suppose that our Lord's Sacred Heart had been full of the various causes which made the Pharisees and Sadducees His enemies, and had traced the mischief up to its source in the false doctrines and tenets of the Jewish sects. It is true that their bad lives, their ambition, their worldliness, their party policy, and other such causes, conspired largely to produce the disastrous effect of which He felt the consequences every day, hindering His work among the people, and making it impossible for the nation, as such, to welcome Him, as He ought to have been welcomed, as their promised King, the subject of the prophecies and other divinely-given anticipations. The leaders of a nation are always able to prevent it from closing with a great offer of grace on the part of God, and these persons were the leaders of the nation to a degree which gave them immense power. But, in the false doctrines of these His enemies, their practical rules of life and views of their relation to God, the manner in which they commonly understood the promises and what was to be expected as to their fulfilment, our Lord could see the secret causes of their opposition, and even of much of their practically bad morality. This seems to be the main teaching on which He insists here.

It is a truth of daily experience that a false doctrine will often leaven a whole life, and influence conduct in matters which appear at first sight altogether foreign to the subject-matter of that particular error. The hypocrisy and external religiousness of the Pharisees were grounded on a false conception of the importance of observances, such as those of which we have lately had to speak in the matter of traditions. The false opinions of the Sadducees made them thoroughly worldly and low-minded, and the

Herodians had probably some peculiar interpretations of their own of the prophecies, which made them what they were in their daily lives and in their influence on the people. Our Lord had little occasion to warn His disciples against the moral faults of these sectarians, and He spoke of them always sparingly, because so many of them were the ruling ecclesiastics of the holy nation. But He might well have occasion to warn them against the influence of false doctrines in insensibly perverting life and lowering morality, especially as He had among His own closest disciples one whose heart was already being eaten away by the sin of avarice. Judas probably persuaded himself that his petty thefts did not amount to much, that they were insignificant in themselves, that he had a kind of liberty of his own in the disposal of the alms, so long as he found enough for the poor and for the needs of the holy company whose temporal interests were confided to his care. A false notion of this kind has often led to very grievous falls in persons bound to the strict observance of religious poverty. Though no others of the Apostles were exposed to exactly the same kind of temptation, and though it is probable that our Lord did not see in the others any danger which had advanced so far towards maturity as in the case of the future traitor, still His keen sense of spiritual perils may have made Him deem it well to warn them on this occasion.

Our Lord compares the mischief of which He speaks to a leaven. That seems exactly to be the image for the working of a false principle, embodied first of all in an almost abstract proposition, which seems a matter of mere speculation, but yet has an undeniable influence on life and conduct. The history of error in the Church enables us to see how such apparently unpractical mistakes as to truth lead very rapidly to moral and spiritual

consequences. If the disciples were at all likely to be affected by self-satisfaction, for instance, in the case of their empire over evil spirits, as is suggested to us by the words of our Lord lately quoted about the seventy-two disciples, or by a kind of elation, after these miracles of the multiplication of the loaves, by having been made in a certain manner the ministers of the miracle, it might be a part of our Lord's most watchful care over them to give the warning about the leaven. He might have considered in His own Heart the spiritual history of so many among these ecclesiastical enemies of his own, men who had probably begun with the simple intention of making themselves faithful ministers of His sanctuary, or of the sacred doctrine confided to the Synagogue. Such is the history of many an heretical minister, brought up, without his own fault, in some bad or imperfect system, in which the Catholic truth is mangled or adulterated. And it would be a serious hindrance to the effect of our Lord's warning that the disciples should make the mistake which they did, because their minds would thus be diverted to some other object, and they would miss the holy instruction which He had wished then and there to convey to them.

For this reason our Lord might well reprove them, for, if there had been nothing more culpable than dulness in the origin of their mistake, still that might entail on them spiritual loss. But our Lord appears to have something to find fault with in their over-anxiety and want of perfect faith in Him—a faith which ought to have been much magnified and intensified by the recent experience they had received of His wonderful tenderness in providing for the temporal needs of those who were not nearly so near or so dear to Him as themselves. Thus He makes this want of faith the subject of His complaint. He catechizes them, as it were, as to the results of the two

miraculous feedings, as if in order to make them ashamed of their anxiety. They had at least one loaf in the ship, and the same power which had fed the multitudes on the seven loaves, or on the five loaves, could well enough make that single loaf suffice for their slender needs. It is perhaps for the sake of the mention of this reproof that we find the Evangelists introducing this second instance of the captious demands of His enemies for a sign. They might also remember the rebuke which it occasioned to the Apostles. Perhaps, at the time, our Lord went on to explain to them more at length what was the exact error which He meant to designate as the leaven in the case of the three sets of people whom He had named. In any case, the warning about the evil influence of even a single false principle or doctrine remains to the Church for all time.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Blind Man healed at Bethsaida.

St. Mark viii. 22—26 ; *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 80.

ONE more miracle remains to us of the period of our Lord's Life on which we are now engaged, and this also we owe to the faithful memory of St. Peter, who must have suggested it to St. Mark for insertion in his Gospel. Like the others of which we have lately spoken, the narrative of this miracle is remarkable for the minuteness of detail which is characteristic of the second Evangelist, and it is not impossible that the chief reason for the difference between these relations and others in the Gospels lies in the fact of the reporter being St. Mark. At the same time it is well to note how, at this time, our Lord seems to have put Himself to more pains in the manner which He wrought His miracles, for nothing of this kind can have been done by Him without a great and special reason.

‘And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought to Him a blind man, and they besought Him that He would touch him.’ Here, then, there is a kind of condition imposed on our Lord, by those whose faith prompted them to seek the cure of their friend. Our Lord could cure by word of mouth, or at a distance if so it pleased Him, but they require that He should touch the patient. This had been the ordinary way for our Lord in the working of His miracles, and therefore there need not have been any great want of faith in the request of these

poor people. But our Lord's action was not quite what they expected. 'And taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town. And spitting upon his eyes, laying His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And looking up he said, I see men, as it were trees, walking. After that again, He laid His hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored, so that he saw all things clearly. And He sent him into his house, saying, Go into thy house, and if thou enter into the town, tell nobody.' Here, then, we have a singular instance of the particular method which our Lord may very probably have used in His miracles when there was time, as when He was asked to heal a single person and not a large number at once, and the particulars are well worthy our attention.

The action of our Lord in leading the blind man out of the town may have been prompted simply by a desire to work the miracle in as much privacy as possible. At this time of His Ministry, as we have already seen, this avoidance of publicity was a great object with our Lord. But there may have been another reason for this singular action. Bethsaida was one of the towns in which many of His mighty works had been wrought, without producing a corresponding effect on the inhabitants. It is named along with Corozain and Capharnaum itself in the denunciation of our Lord mentioned by St. Matthew. It may therefore have been a place where He did not choose to work other miracles. He may in this sense have excommunicated Bethsaida, dealing with it as a town unworthy of any further favours. This reason is suggested by some of the Catholic commentators. If this were the case, then the miracle becomes very instructive to us, both as to the blight that may fall on communities which have been very highly favoured, in consequence of their want of correspondence to graces

already received, and also as to the compassion of our Lord, which will find some even laborious way of benefiting individuals in such communities, who are not responsible for the common want of belief.

We have here a large field opened to us for meditation on the ways of God. For it is beyond all question, that individuals do suffer most terrible loss, because they belong to communities which have as such fallen under the ban of God's justice in this world, a justice which frequently obliges Him to withdraw from them spiritual opportunities and means of grace originally intended for all His children. Countries lose the true faith for the sins of their sovereigns or the advisers of their sovereigns, or they are punished in other ways for prevalent sins, such as those which are commonly spoken of as calling down the vengeance of God from Heaven. The spiritual loss thus entailed on individuals may last for ever, for it may shut out thousands and thousands of children from the saving waters of Baptism, and it may deprive the half-penitent sinner, in numberless cases, of the aid of the Christian priesthood and the Christian sacraments, by the careful administration of which he might have risen to a state of true penitence sufficient for his pardon. These are truths which we cannot deny, and they are most terrible truths, when we consider the state of the world, though they do not affect the justice of God, because the principle still holds true, and has held true for ever, that no one can suffer the eternal torments of the next world without his own deliberate, conscious, unrepented sin. But, on the other hand, we have a thousand reasons for remembering how very large and wonderful is that realm of the mercy of God in His dealings with single souls, each one in a way of His own, of which this, and some other of our Lord's miracles, suggests the thought. Bethsaida might be, as

it were, under an interdict, in the justice of our Lord, and yet this blind man, brought to Him by men of Bethsaida, was to have his cure, though it might cost our Lord unusual trouble to work it. But it is done in a way which preserves the kind of estrangement between our Lord and the place itself. He leads the man outside the town, and when He enjoins on him to return home, not taking him back Himself, He bids him, 'If thou enter into the town, tell nobody.'

The other actions of our Lord are also full of instruction. The laying His hands on him, having first spat upon his eyes, is an action which, like many others, reminds us of the truth of the instrumentality of the Sacred Humanity of our Lord in the operation of the miracles. The gradual healing is another remarkable circumstance. It cannot have been the case that our Lord was fettered as to his power of communicating the full use of the faculty of sight in a moment, if so He had chosen. In the case of the man who was born blind, of whom we are told some time later than this by St. John, it seems as if the full use of the faculty of sight was given by our Lord at the same time with the faculty itself, which had never before been possessed by the man in question. The kind of education of the eye to the use which we commonly make of it, which seems to take place in children as they grow up, was superseded in the case of this man. In the case before us, the eye was simply restored, as it appears, but the use of the faculty was given back gradually. It is of little use to speculate on the reasons which our Lord may have had in thus working the miracle, reasons of which we are told nothing, but which may have had connection with the state of the soul of the recipient of the favour, or with our Lord's own plan of action at that particular time. But it is well to observe that our Lord worked

His miracles in so many different ways and under so many different conditions. In this way they become more perfectly representations of the methods which He pursues in His dealings with the souls of men, methods of infinite beauty and variety, the intelligence of which is reserved for us as one of the happy contemplations of Heaven. God is as great in the framing of the wing of the smallest insect, or the valves of the most minute shell on the shore of the sea, as in the creation and the government of the whole universe. And so in His spiritual dealings, of which these miracles are a kind of picture, He is as great in His gentleness, and tenderness, and caution, and slowness, in His work, when so He chooses to work, as in the mighty streams of grace with which He sometimes floods a soul intended for great things in His Kingdom, as in the instantaneous conversion of St. Paul, or the change of the heart of St. Mary Magdalene into a furnace of Divine love.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Confession of St. Peter.

St. Matt. xvi. 13—20 ; St. Mark viii. 27—30 ; St. Luke ix. 18—21 ;
Vita Vitæ Nostræ, § 81.

WE have now reached the eve of the close of this second period of the Preaching of our Lord, the moment at which He thought it fit to speak for the first time, as it seems, openly about His Church, and also about His Sacred Passion. This period, which has been called in these volumes the 'Training of the Apostles,' lasted for about a year. It was ushered in by a kind of change in the manner of our Lord's dealing with the people generally, occasioned by the virulent hostility with which He had been pursued by the ecclesiastical authorities ever since His appearance at the feast of the Pasch, the second such feast in the course of His Ministry. At this feast He had healed the impotent man at the pool on the Sabbath-day, and had held a long disputation with His adversaries in the Holy City itself. On His return to Galilee, which was perhaps hastened by the opposition which His teaching at Jerusalem had aroused, the hostility towards Him was intensified by one other miracle wrought by Him on the Sabbath, and He very soon began to retire more than before from the public gaze. No doubt He still continued His usual method of passing from town to town and from village to village preaching, and working miracles of mercy. But from this time He was seldom to be found in the

cities in which He had before shown Himself the most frequently. His enemies were constantly on the look out for Him. A kind of party alliance had been concluded between the Pharisees of Jerusalem and the Herodians, the actual political governors of Galilee, and even the life of our Lord was not, humanly speaking, safe from their unscrupulous designs. He was practically doomed to death both by the ecclesiastical and the secular authorities. We find also that His personal friends, among whom His Blessed Mother was probably residing, as far as she resided anywhere permanently, were most seriously alarmed for His safety.

The period of which we speak begins, in the Gospel history, with the solemn call of the twelve Apostles to become in a new and closer manner the inseparable companions of our Lord. The call of the Twelve brought them into closer relations than ever with Him, and they had now a kind of official and recognized position as His delegates and subordinates in the work of the ministry. It is probable that all the Twelve had already become familiar with our Lord, before this solemn call, though some of them had joined His company at a much later point of time than others. Immediately after the call of the Twelve followed the Sermon on the Plain, in which the former Sermon on the Mount was summed up, epitomized, and in many respects modified, not by any change of doctrine, but by a severer and more reserved tone in our Lord's addresses to the people. The change in the audience and in the circumstances under which our Lord was now preaching, completely accounts for whatever difference exists between these two discourses. This Sermon was probably a great instruction to the Apostles themselves, as well as to the people. Not long after this we find our Lord deeply grieved by some new forms taken by

the opposition against Him. It is now that the calumny about His casting out devils by collusion with the prince of the devils first makes its appearance, and this is followed or accompanied by the captious demand of a sign from Heaven, after so many marvellous miracles. Thus the Apostles' first experience of their own closer familiarity with our Lord, and all that that familiarity involved, was saddened and darkened to them by these new phases in His treatment on the part of the world. His popularity with the multitudes continued as long as He worked thousands of miracles for their benefit, and there were always a large number of souls ready to receive willingly, and to profit by, the gracious teaching which He lavished upon them. But the position of our Lord became more and more one of danger and proscription as time went on.

It must have been already evident to any friends of our Lord who were men of worldly prudence, that, to all human appearance, His Mission could not succeed according to the common measure of success. He had against Him the immense power of the ecclesiastical rulers, and such men are always unscrupulous in their choice of means when they have persuaded themselves that a certain object is to be gained as a matter of right. Their influence was that of a dominant caste in a nation whose whole spirit was religious, and who gave to those who represented authority all the obedience which Christians pay to their own prelates. The best among the Jews would have to be convinced very strongly, before they would take a side which the Chief Priests denounced. The power of excommunication was in their hands, and this implied terrible penalties, both in a worldly and in a spiritual sense.

It is needless to say that the secular powers in the country, whether the princes of the house of Herod or

the Roman Governor, could not be expected to favour our Lord's influence. They might not have the bigoted hatred of which we see specimens in the Chief Priests, but they were bound, both by inclination and by interest, to preserve the public tranquillity for which they were responsible. Experience had already shown them that no influences were so likely to disturb this tranquillity among the Jews, as those of a new religious movement, centred round the person of a supposed Prophet, King, or Messias. Our Lord's hold, even on the multitude, was precarious, and He seems to have held back till the very last before He said any strong words which might set them in open opposition to their rulers. Thus it had come about that the year which was now coming to its end, the first year of the existence of the Apostolic body as such, had been one of great external danger and even disaster. They must have had much to suffer, even beyond the hard and laborious life which was a part of their vocation. They were trained in adversity, and could not be deceived as to the prospects which awaited them as the faithful followers of a Master already proscribed.

Our Lord's own way of meeting the opposition of His enemies was not such as to invigorate the spirits of His friends, if they looked at matters from the standpoint of human prudence. He was indeed prudent, but He seemed to yield without a struggle. He seemed as anxious to hide Himself as they were to destroy Him. This is more or less true of the whole period of which we are now speaking, but it is particularly true of the last part of that period. After the calumny about His alleged league with Beelzebub, He retired more and more. He adopted a new and reserved manner of teaching the people, one which must have been less welcome to many, and which certainly served to make

His words less open to attack, for the reason that they were less easily understood. After the teaching by parables by the sea-shore near Capharnaum, He was hardly ever to be found where He had been most accustomed to teach. Latterly, during the space of time which ensued after the return of the Apostles to their Master's side, His course had been almost continuously a flight from one remote place to another, broken only by occasional returns to Capharnaum and other places on the Lake, from which He could at any moment fly in the boat.

The period before us had been, indeed, illustrated by very remarkable miracles. He had in this year twice raised the dead to life. He had worked a multitude of miracles for the sake of showing to the disciples of St. John Baptist this kind of evidence of His Mission. He had twice fed multitudes with a few loaves and fishes. He had shown His power over the elements of nature, the winds and the waves, in a way unknown before. His empire over the evil spirits had never before been so wonderfully displayed as in the instance of the legion of devils. He had begun to work through the mere touch of the hem of His garment. And several of the miracles of this time of which we have special mention, were worked either in favour of Gentiles, or in parts where Gentiles were much mixed up with the Jewish population. In all these miracles there is something of a widening of the range of power already displayed by our Lord, of the largeness of His Divine sympathies, and of the character of universality in His Kingdom. This is the more remarkable when it comes at the same time with the diminution of His influence with the holy nation itself, and His persecution by its recognized authorities. The same period embraces the last witness to our Lord on the part of His great

Precursor, who had now finally prepared his own disciples for the acceptance of our Lord, and his removal from the scene as the first of the martyrs, even before our Lord Himself had opened the glorious chain of crowns to be won by suffering for the truth or for virtue.

It is natural to think what must have been the effect of the varied conditions under which our Lord had now to carry on His work, on the minds of His chosen followers. It is clear that they became more and more a distinct community, with less and less of harmony with anything outside themselves. The adversities which they had to witness and to share as the lot of their Lord, supplied the sternest and most bracing training in His school that could be imagined. At the same time all the difficulties of the Gospel preaching and of the position of our Lord in the eyes of the nation did not suffice to wean them, entirely and at once, from the dreams of earthly success and prosperity in which they indulged, looking on such conditions as the natural results of the Mission of our Lord, however they might be, for a time, accidentally hindered. Our Lord bore with their defects with the utmost charity and compassion. He showed them how much He trusted them, by sending them forth to preach two and two, after giving them the long instruction which has served ever since as the charter of Apostolic work. To read over this instruction is to see how strongly He insisted on the certainty of persecution and of the hatred of the world for them. The murder of St. John Baptist, coming either in the middle or at the close of their missionary course, was a stern commentary on the warnings of their Master.

At the same time it must have become more and more evident to the Apostles that our Lord was now

proceeding steadily onwards in the unfolding of His great plans for the salvation of the world, and that what seemed to His enemies to be His comparative failure or reduction to insignificance, only gave Him the opportunity of laying more deeply the foundations on which He intended to build. More than once He seemed to be declaring open war against the enemies who haunted His footsteps. He formed the nucleus of a separate body of His own in the selection of the Apostles themselves, and He acted with summary authority in sending them out to preach in His name. They found themselves endowed with miraculous powers like His own. More than that, He acted with great authority and fearlessness as to immediate results, in the promulgation of the laws and principles of His new Kingdom. The great teaching in which He had set forth the doctrine of the Blessed Sacrament was an instance of this, and the principle as to true defilement, which He laid down in the dispute about the traditions, was another.

One by one, therefore, the great features of the Gospel Kingdom were being disclosed, the power of the remission of sins given to men, the authority of the Son of Man over the Sabbath-day itself, the authoritative mission which He committed to the Apostles, so that any one who rejected them would be treated more rigorously in the Judgment than the men of Sodom and Gomorrha, and then the wonderful mystery of the Blessed Sacrament, containing in itself and presupposing the whole series of His humiliations and sufferings and subsequent triumph over death and Hell. It is not likely that the Apostles received no more instruction on these great matters than that which was conveyed in the discourse to which they had listened in common with the people, to whom it was primarily addressed in the synagogue of Capharnaum, although it must be supposed that they

were still very far indeed from a complete enlightenment on what was presented to their faith.

It could only be by entering into the Sacred Heart of our Lord Himself that we could understand the whole truth concerning this calm and unbroken process of the gradual formation of His Apostles and of the system of which they were to be the administrators. It was a process of which His enemies little dreamed, and which was more or less a secret even to those nearest to Him, who were yet the persons whom He was moulding and elevating for their great work, the materials out of which the fabric of His Kingdom was to be raised. The one heart which shared His thoughts and designs was that of His Blessed Mother. The Scribes and Pharisees were, in truth, aiding in the work, for they were helping our Lord to prepare His disciples for the doctrine of the Cross which was soon to be openly proclaimed. They were assisting in the separation of the new Kingdom from that of which it was to take the place in the counsels of God, and they thus removed the great danger which might have ensued to the Church, if she had been founded on the lines of a national polity. But the great worker of all was the Heavenly Father of our Lord, in His constant Providential action on the souls of the Apostles, the drawing, and the leading, and the teaching, and the learning, of which our Lord Himself so often spoke. We are now come to the point when the final step was to be taken by our Lord, in at least announcing the actual foundation of the Church upon the chief of these His companions, the one of them whom He had always distinguished as having a peculiar eminence among them, and this is the natural climax and consummation of the training of the Apostles, in the sense in which we have been using the words. The training of the Apostles was a work which could never

cease as long as they were in this mortal flesh, but their preparation for their great office in the Kingdom of God had now reached that point when the foundation of the Church could be openly spoken of, at least to them.

The step on the part of our Lord of which we have now to speak, is one of those of which we have naturally but few instances in the Sacred History—the selection of a single person for a great office and position, preceded in the Divine counsels by a solemn trial of the person, as a test whether he will be faithful, and as an occasion by which the great reward may be won by a display of faithfulness. Such was the trial of Abraham, in the Old Testament, such the trial of Mary, such, again, the trial of St. Joseph, in the New Dispensation. The perfect faith of Mary gave occasion to the grace of the accomplishment in her of the Divine design of the Incarnation. The faithfulness of St. Joseph under his great trial, when he was left without distinct revelation on the subject of the Conception of our Lord, merited, in this sense, the office for which he was destined in the Holy Family, and which is the foundation of the special dignity of this great saint in the Kingdom of God. And now the time was come for the conferring on St. Peter the promise of the dignity which had been foreshadowed from the moment when he came as a disciple to our Lord, and was told by Him that he should be called, and should therefore be, Cephas. What our Lord had now to do was in this sense distinctly and entirely personal, as personal as the choice of Mary for His Mother, or of St. Joseph for His reputed father. We shall see hereafter in what sense the privileges of the chief Apostle were to be shared by his brethren in the Apostolic College. But the act of our Lord, of which we have now to speak, begins indeed by a general

demand on the faith of all the company, but it proceeds immediately to certain gifts which are incommunicable and belong to St. Peter alone, in the same way as there is but one Mother of God, and but one Head of the Holy Family. 'And Jesus went out and His disciples, and came into the quarters of Cesarea Philippi. And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples also were with Him, and He asked them, saying, Whom do men say that I am? Whom do men say that the Son of Man is? Who answered Him saying, Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets, or as one of the prophets, and others say that one of the former prophets is risen again.'

It may be worth while to linger for a moment on this answer of the Apostles, which no doubt represented faithfully the common opinions current concerning our Lord. The deep impression made on the people by St. John Baptist is evidenced by the fact that they should first of all think of him, as the conspicuous preacher and teacher of the day. For St. John had worked no miracles, and the impression produced by him was due to his sanctity, and perhaps also to the subject and character of his preaching, which went so straight to the hearts and consciences of men. The savage cruelty which had brought about his death served also to glorify him in the eyes of the people, as is always the case with the victims of such barbarity on the part of persons in power. The princes of the house of Herod were probably objects of general hatred, as well as of general fear, and thus the people would rejoice to think that one whom they had put to death had risen from the dead, more powerful than ever.

It is also perfectly natural to find that there was an expectation of the coming of Elias. This had been most plainly predicted by the last of the prophets, and the

miracles of our Lord would remind the people of those of this great prophet. The other name mentioned by the Apostles is that of Jeremias. He was one of the prophets whose name was in great honour among the people, as we gather from the mention of him in the Book of the Machabees. It is there mentioned, as a tradition, that he had hidden the ark, and the altar of incense, and the tabernacle, in a cave on the mountain where Moses had been taken to see the Holy Land, and that it was he who would come at the end and restoration of all things to guide the people to find them once more. He is also mentioned as having appeared to Judas Machabeus along with the High Priest Onias. Onias appeared as 'a man admirable for age and glory, and environed with great beauty and majesty.' He told Judas, 'This is a lover of his brethren, and of the people of Israel, this is he that prayeth much for the people and for all the Holy City, Jeremias the prophet of God. Whereupon Jeremias stretched forth his right hand, and gave to Judas a sword of gold, saying, 'Take this holy sword, a gift from God, wherewith thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Israel.'¹ Jeremias was also one of the prophets whose office it had been especially to foretell the Kingdom of the promised Messias, and he had besides been the one of the prophets who had suffered most cruelly for his faithfulness to God in the bad days of the last kings of Juda. This might have been the reason why his name should rise to the minds of the people in connection with our Lord. The other opinion speaks only of the prophets in general. It is remarkable that the conjectures should be so largely confined to the resuscitation of the dead, while there was the great prophecy of Moses, concerning a prophet like himself, of which we find mention in the inquiries of the Pharisees

¹ 2 Mach. xv. 13.

of St. John Baptist. This conjecture, however, is not entirely excluded by the words of the Evangelists.

Jesus saith to them, 'But Who do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answering said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven.'

There is not entire unanimity among the Catholic doctors on the question, how far St. Peter, on this great occasion, answered officially, as it were, in the name of himself and of his brethren, or only in his own name. Some of the Fathers think that he was far advanced beyond all the rest in his knowledge of the Divine mystery of our Lord's Person, a mystery which included the whole doctrine of the Ever Blessed Trinity, the Consubstantiality of the three Divine Persons, and the Incarnation of the Son of God. It could have been no faith short of this that our Lord could have spoken of in terms of such high praise. Others think that the faith now professed by St. Peter was the faith of all, though there may have been various degrees of the distinctness with which it was apprehended by various Apostles. This is a question as to which we are without sufficient authority on the face of Sacred Scripture to be certain about the answer. A little time before this we have St. Peter answering, in the name of all, our Lord's question about their going away, and our Lord does not in His reply say anything about the deficiency of faith in

them, although He said that one of them was a devil. What our Lord now seems to require from St. Peter is the profession of faith which follows on His question, and it is not certain that this faith may not have long been in the hearts of the Apostles before they were called on solemnly to profess it. There may have been some pre-eminence of faith in the chief Apostle, but it is difficult to think that hearts like those of St. John, or St. James, and others among the number, had not already drunk in the teaching of the Eternal Father concerning His Son. And perhaps, if there had been great diversity of mind among the Apostles, it would not have passed unmentioned by the Evangelists.

It had already become usual for St. Peter to speak in the name of all, and he does so now without making any distinction between himself and the others, whereas if such a difference existed it would naturally have been mentioned by him in answer to our Lord's question, which was as general, as to their opinions concerning Him, as had been His former question concerning the opinions of the people. Nor again, is it easy to see what higher thoughts they could have of Him, if they did not think Him to be the Son of God, than those which they had named as the thoughts of the people, unless they had no true conception that the Messiah was to be the Son of God. We are nowhere told that the pre-eminent dignity which our Lord was about to confer on St. Peter was conferred simply on the ground of his great faith, without a special and personal selection of him for that dignity by the free choice of God. It is true that he could not have had the dignity without his profession of faith, but it does not follow that it was the profession of his faith alone that won for him the dignity. It was the gift and choice of God. And, as our Lord goes on to confer on the Apostle this dignity, this may account

sufficiently for the use of the singular number in what He says about his faith, without it being necessary to suppose that there were no others present who could have made the same profession with the same true faith. For it might follow from that that the Eternal Father had not as yet revealed this great truth to the other great Apostles by the same process as that which He had used in making it known to St. Peter. It would be difficult to think this, without some express warrant for it.

It has been said already that this great confession of faith on the part of St. Peter does not go beyond, in substance, the confession made by the same Apostle, spontaneously and without any formal question from our Lord, after the conclusion of the discourse in the synagogue of Capharnaum, on the subject of the Blessed Sacrament. Then he had said, 'We have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God.' There is very little difference in the words. It would seem to follow from this that there was something specially formal and solemn about the occasion of which we are now speaking, as distinct from the other. Our Lord's question was meant to elicit a formal profession of faith, for the purpose of grounding on it some great personal favour, of using it as the occasion for some great onward step in the revelation of His Kingdom. The confession of this faith was to be an offering to God, on which a great reward was to follow. This aspect of the incident is confirmed by the statement of St. Luke that the whole scene was preceded by prayer on the part of our Lord, and that His disciples were praying with Him. It was a moment, therefore, of great solemnity, and we have now to see what was the blessing to be conferred by our Lord on St. Peter as the crown of his great profession of faith.

CHAPTER XX.

The Rock of the Church.

St. Matt. xvi. 17—19 : *Vita Vitæ Nostræ*, § 81.

THE answer of our Lord to St. Peter may be divided into several parts, each of which is full of the deepest meaning. First of all there is the blessing which our Lord declares to be his. ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven.’ The second portion is the direct return, so to say, which He makes to His Apostle for his confession. St. Peter had declared Him to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Our Lord in return declared him to be Peter, that is, He now confers on him the name which He had before promised him, and a promise of a name on the part of God means the promise of the graces and dignities contained in the name. Our Lord further goes on to say that He will build His Church on St. Peter. It is most certain that, in the language in which our Lord spoke, the same word was used in the first clause of the sentence as in the last, as if He had said, ‘Thou art Peter, and on this Peter I will build My Church.’ But the usage of the language in which the Gospels are written required the substitution of the other substantive word, in the second clause, which we translate Rock.

This is the second part of the answer of our Lord. The third part is the twofold promise, or the single

promise one part of which grows out of the other, of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the ratification in Heaven of whatever Peter shall bind or loose on earth. 'And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven.' But it must be noted also, that although this great answer of our Lord may be thus divided into various parts, which may be considered separately, still the whole answer hangs together, and the later portions grow out of the former portions. It is because he is Peter, because our Lord has given him the name, and, in the name, the qualities and graces which the name implies, that our Lord will build on him His Church, and it is because the Church is built on Peter that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. It is because he is the rock on which the Church is built, and because, built on him, the Church shall never be prevailed against, that the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven shall be given to him. It is because he has the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven that whatsoever he shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever he shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven. It now remains to consider the parts of this great utterance, one by one, in order.

The first words of our Lord are the direct answer to the Confession made by St. Peter. The Apostle had confessed distinctly the faith in the Divinity of our Lord and that He was the Christ, the promised Messias. It is reasonable to suppose, from the words of our Lord, that this faith was perfect and complete in every part, for He declares it to be the result of the direct teaching of the Father. 'Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My

Father Who is in Heaven.' Flesh and blood are the Scriptural words by which human nature, human intercourse, human evidence, and the like, are expressed. Our Lord certainly cannot have meant that St. Peter had learnt nothing towards the building up of his faith from his constant intercourse with Himself, from his observation of His miracles, his listening to His teaching, his study of His manners and methods of dealing with men, the authority of His teaching, His empire over the devils, over diseases, over the powers of nature, His sweetness and patience and attractiveness, His humility, His Divine purity, and the like. These had all been the materials with which the Heavenly Father had worked in His guidance of the mind of St. Peter to the great conclusion, that our Lord was the Son of God. These things alone and without the special action of the Father on the heart and soul, had not the power of generating Divine faith. And thus it is that, however strong may be the evidences on which faith is founded, it can never be a human process. No power of reasoning, no force of demonstration, can bring it home to the soul and plant it there. Our Lord had but lately said that no man could come to Him, except the Father Who had sent Him, drew him. After all the force of evidences has been applied to the soul, there must still be the Divine grace helping the soul to accept them, and enlightening it with the light of faith, which produces an assurance and a conviction which nothing else can cause. The word of God, moreover, on which faith rests, may be presented to the soul in a number of different ways, including alike its delivery by human means and external ministrations, and also by secret action on the mind and heart. This action of the Father had had its place in the blessed soul of St. Peter, and our Lord, always on the watch for the working of the Father, speaks of this

alone as the one necessary and all-sufficient cause of the faith which the Apostle had professed.

These words of our Lord, with regard to St. Peter, may be illustrated by the very similar use of the same expressions by St. Paul in the account which he gives to the Galatians of his own conversion and his proceedings afterwards. 'When it pleased Him Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me' (that is, it seems, to me) 'that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I condescended not to flesh and blood, neither went I to Jerusalem to the Apostles who were before me,'¹ and the rest. St. Paul tells us in this passage that he had his knowledge of the Gospel which he preached, not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. In this respect he was taught his faith by the same Divine action as that spoken of in these words of our Lord to St. Peter, but that Divine action worked its end, in his case, by special and personal revelation. When St. Paul says that he condescended not to flesh and blood, he means that he did not go to study his creed under any human guidance, but went into the solitude of Arabia, where he seems to have spent a considerable time, receiving there the Divine instructions which were to be the ground of all his knowledge of the Gospel. He learnt the truth about our Lord and His system by the teaching of the Father, quite as perfectly as St. Peter had learnt his own knowledge by the same teaching, even though he had been, all the time, not at a distance from our Lord, but His inseparable companion. The human element in the formation of the faith of St. Peter was, notwithstanding this ineffable privilege of his, so insignificant by the side of the Divine action on his soul, that our Lord makes no mention of it. And it need

¹ Galat. i. 15—17.

not be thought that St. Paul had no communication with human sources of information concerning our Lord, but that his real knowledge of Him came from the revelation of which he speaks.

The next words of our Lord, 'And I say to thee,' are obviously a reference and a kind of answer to the confession of the Apostle. It is as if our Lord had said, 'Thou hast said that I am the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and in return for thy confession of My Divinity and My Mission, I now declare to thee what thou art. Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build My Church.' And again, there is more than this kind of antithesis and answer in the words of our Lord. For the position which He confers on St. Peter, by now giving him the name which He had before promised to him, is an act of His own in His office as the Son of God, sent into the world to take flesh and to be the Messiah, or the Christ. It is true I am the Christ the Son of the Living God, and because I am what thou hast declared Me to be, therefore thou art Peter. I call thee by this new name, and I give to thee what the new name signifies, and on this Rock I will build My Church. This is the office of the Messiah, to found His Kingdom and to build His Church, and as Peter, by the guidance of the Father, had discerned the Son of God sent into the world, so our Lord in turn chooses St. Peter for the foundation of the fabric which He is to raise, and the choice of this foundation is the first step in the accomplishment of His Mission as the Messiah.

It is in this sense that we may understand the sayings of some of the Fathers, in which they speak of our Lord Himself as the chief foundation of the Church, and of the privilege of St. Peter as conceded to him by a kind of participation. There can be no doubt that our Lord is the foundation of the whole heavenly

Kingdom of God. Everything is to be built on Him, everything is to flow from Him, and everything is to be supported by Him, every authority is His authority, every ruler rules through Him and by Him, every act of sacerdotal or royal power is His act. The image used of Him in Sacred Scripture is, however, rather that of the chief corner stone than of the foundation, and in the passage of St. Paul to the Corinthians in which He seems to be called the foundation, it is most probable that what the Apostle means is that the true foundation of the Christian religion is the faith in the Divine Mission and Person of our Lord.² But still, in this general sense, it is beyond all question that whatever strength or firmness or solidity or immobility St. Peter has as the foundation of the Church, comes by participation from our Lord. Thus we understand St. Leo in his third sermon on the anniversary of his consecration, where he thus comments on this passage: 'As My Father has manifested to thee My Divinity, so do I make known to thee thy excellency, for thou art Peter, that is, while I am the rock, the corner stone, who make both one, I the foundation, other than which no man can lay, yet thou also art the rock, because by My strength thou art made firm, that the things that are Mine own by right of power, may be thine in common with Me by participation; and on this rock I will build My Church, on this strength I will build an eternal Temple, and the sublimity of My Church which is to have its place in Heaven is to rise up in the firmness of this faith.'³ In this sense our Lord is the foundation stone of the Church. But He is also the founder of the Church, and the founder must have a foundation other than Himself, although the whole strength and firmness of the foundation must come from Himself.

² 1 Cor. iii. 11.³ Sermon iii.

And this is yet more evident from the truth that the foundation of the Church is laid on the faith of Peter, or as others will have it, on faith, whereas our Lord is the Truth, the Way, the Life, but He is nowhere called the Faith. Faith rests on Him, believes in Him, apprehends Him, and therefore must be distinct from Him.

It is clear, therefore, that the words about St. Peter being the foundation on which the Church is to be built must be understood of him personally, however true it may be that all the qualities which make him a fit foundation are derived from our Lord. If we are to find any passage in our Lord's former sayings which may be considered as recurring to His mind when He spoke these great words, it might be that at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, repeated also at the end of the Sermon on the Plain, in which He contrasts the two builders of houses, one on the rock and the other on the sand, and the fate of their two edifices respectively. 'The wise man built his house on the rock, and the rain fell and the floods came, and the wind blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not for it was founded on a rock.' This passage is a commentary on the words here, 'on this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it,' for it is built upon the Rock. Our Lord must therefore mean, that the Rock of which He speaks will secure the Church built upon it, and this Rock, both by what precedes the mention of the gates of Hell, and by what follows that mention, in our Lord's words, is St. Peter. There must be a certain kind of violence done to the text, if there is any change of subject in the course of these sentences. But as it is true that St. Peter can only be the Rock by participation from our Lord, so it is also true that the faith of Peter is the reason, or perhaps more properly the

meritorious cause, of his being the Rock. This requires explanation, in order to meet the difficulties which can be raised from some of the Fathers, who speak of faith as the foundation.

It is not a new thing, in the unfolding of the counsels of God, to find His saints and servants prepared for some great post and commission in His Kingdom by trials of various kinds. This was the case of Abraham, of David, of our Blessed Lady herself, and of St. Joseph. The trial may often be one of faith. This was the case with Abraham, and to a certain extent with Mary. With David we may suppose that it was faith, but also, perhaps, the test of how he would behave to Saul under so many provocations to revenge himself for the ill-treatment he had received. With St. Joseph the trial was one of charity, and also of faith. It might be said thus that Abraham had won by his faith the great blessing of the promise made to him and that his faith was in that sense the cause and foundation of those blessings. So it may be said of our Blessed Lady as St. Elisabeth said of her, 'Blessed thou that didst believe!' Or, again, it is sometimes said of her that it was her incomparable humility that won for her the grace of the Divine Maternity. So it may be said of St. Joseph, that the virtues which he displayed in his trial merited for him the grace of being made head of the Holy Family.

In all these cases the grace conferred as the reward was something altogether different from the grace or virtue by which it was won. Nor was it conferred as a matter of right, but only because it pleased God so to crown the virtue which had been manifested. It may be said, in this sense, that the faith of St. Peter, and its profession, won for him the grace to be made the Rock. But it does not follow that the grace of being the Rock was the faith which he had professed. The blessing of being

made the foundation of the Church was not the same thing as the faith by which that blessing was earned. The grace of being the foundation is the grace of solidity, strength, unshaken fortitude, unfaltering constancy, and the power of supporting and sustaining and strengthening others, the power of resisting the gates of Hell, as the foundation of the house built on the rock in our Lord's own image, was able to sustain the storms of rain and flood and wind. The grace of being the Rock was a grace especially designed and conferred by our Lord as the Supreme Architect and Sovereign, which He might have withheld if it had pleased Him and which rose higher than the merits and graces to which St. Peter had already risen. So was the grace of the Divine Maternity in the case of our Lady, so also the grace of the headship of the Holy Family in the case of St. Joseph.

God chose to bestow a personal gift and crown in all these cases, making the persons concerned fit instruments of those glorious purposes of His, in carrying out which they were to take a part. It may be said that the humility or the faith of Mary fitted her for the office of Divine Mother, or that the faith of Abraham fitted him for the grace of being the father of many nations and of the promised seed, and that the forbearance and patience of David made him fit to reign, and that the charity of St. Joseph made him fit to rule the Holy Family. But in all these cases the Divine favour was something different from, not the same as, the grace or virtue by which it was brought down on the chosen servant of God. Thus, in this sense, it might not be true to say that the humility of Mary was the cause of her Conception of the Son of God by the Holy Ghost; or that the charity of St. Joseph made him the foster father of the Incarnate Son. It is in this sense only that we can understand the

sayings of some of the Fathers, that the Rock on which the Church is built is not Peter, but faith. It is Peter, having been proved and found worthy by faith; but not the faith of Peter, in the sense that if any one else had the faith of Peter he might have been made the Rock by our Lord. The supreme dignity which is now promised to him is as much a personal and incommunicable gift from the free choice of our Lord, as was the gift conferred on St. Paul of being, in the peculiar sense in which he was such, the Apostle of the Gentiles, or the gift conferred on St. Matthew of being an Evangelist, or that granted to St. John of being the guardian and companion of our Blessed Lady during the latter years of her life.

‘Thou art Peter, and on this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.’ This is the first time in the Gospel narrative that the word Church occurs. It is natural to ask, what was the idea conveyed by this word to the Apostles? The answer seems to be, that though the word Church is a new word in our own language, it was in fact a word with which the Apostles would have been perfectly familiar, as it is practically the same word as that of Assembly or Synagogue. It would convey to their minds the idea of a visible body, belonging especially to God, selected and called out of the world or out of the nations, a body in the main and in principle spiritual, but yet having its temporal rights, its outward organization, its hierarchy, its sacred rites, its rulers, its various ranks and grades, its continuity from generation to generation, its promise of Divine assistance, its authority, its necessity, in the sense that outside it there was no obtaining the special blessings which were enshrined in it for the benefit of men, a body to rebel against the rule of which was sinful, and to separate from which was to be cut off from God.

This at least would have been conveyed by the word to the Apostles. It would remind them of the privileges of the chosen people, the relation in which that people stood to God and to the rest of the world. It would be almost synonymous in their minds with the common phrase of the Kingdom of Heaven, though it would express more exactly the notion of a religious body devoted to the worship of God and the practice of the true religion. It was one of the chief reasons of the whole institution of what we call the Synagogue, that it should prepare the minds of men for the institution of the Church.

This is enough to say on this great subject in this place, for there are many of the future parables and discourses of our Lord in which the lineaments of the Church are more and more definitely drawn, as time goes on, by Him. What has now been said is sufficient, for it enables us to understand what is the meaning of the promise that against the Church founded on Peter the gates of Hell shall not prevail. That is, they shall not be able to prevent the Church from living on generation after generation in the exercise of her full powers and work for the good of souls. The gates of Hell would prevail against the Church, if they were able to corrupt her doctrine, or to hinder her from setting forth the truth clearly and infallibly. They would prevail against her if they could succeed in dividing her visible, indefectible, and necessary unity. They would succeed and prevail, if they could bring about the division of her children from her visible Head, and break down his irreversible authority. They would succeed and prevail, if they could disorganize her hierarchy, get rid of her priesthood, abolish her sacraments, fetter her preaching of the Word of God, cut her up into separate and rival kingdoms, confine her to a

nationality, cut off the traditions of holy living according to the Evangelical counsels, prevent the intercourse between the shepherds and their flocks, destroy her liberty of action and of speech in the face of the great powers of the world. If these and other such triumphs of the powers of darkness would destroy the freedom and imperil the existence and the life of the Church, then the promise now made means that these triumphs shall never be. And it means that these triumphs shall never be, precisely for the reason that the Church is built on Peter, that it is through him and the line of successors in his office whom he represents, that the Church will be preserved against all these dangers. They are like the wind and the flood and the rain already spoken of by our Lord, which cannot shake or overwhelm the house that is built on the rock, because it is so built on the rock, and the rock is made its foundation in order that it may preserve the house built on it from these dangers.

‘And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed also in Heaven.’ The image of the keys signifies the supreme authority and jurisdiction which belongs to sovereigns and those who govern in their name. The language is taken from the prophecies of Isaias, where it is said of a great servant of God, Eliacim the son of Helcias, the priest, who is to be substituted in the rule of the synagogue for Sobna, who is to be deposed, ‘I will clothe him with thy robe, and will strengthen him with thy girdle, and will give thy power into his hand, and he shall be as a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Juda. And I will lay the key of the house of David upon his shoulder, and he shall open and none

shall shut, and he shall shut and none shall open.'⁴ In this passage we have the germ of the words of our Blessed Lord to St. Peter, and it is remarkable that these words are in truth a kind of transference of the authority which had hitherto been vested in the synagogue to the Church founded on Peter. The same image is applied to our Lord Himself in the Apocalypse of St. John, and thus we have the language which is here applied to St. Peter used of the Chief Pastor and ruler of the Church, in whose name St. Peter is to reign. 'These things saith the Holy and true One, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, shutteth and no man openeth.'⁵ Here again the words of St. Leo, quoted above, may be applied. Our Lord communicates to His representative on earth the powers and qualities and prerogatives which belong to Himself.

The words which follow in the text before us are an echo of those of the Prophet about shutting and opening, only that our Lord changes the language into the contrast between binding and loosing. The keys which open or shut may be understood of the authority of the chief governor in admitting or excluding from the kingdom. But the keys which are connected with the power of binding and loosing imply a further power than that, the power of legislating, of imposing obligations or releasing from obligations, of decreeing that a thing is lawful or unlawful, as well as that of absolving from blame and punishment or insisting on the delay or refusal of pardon and remission. Thus the words cover the full exercise of jurisdiction and of legislation. And moreover our Lord adds something more. For instead of the clause about opening and no man shutting,

⁴ Isaias xxii. 21—23.

⁵ Apoc. iii. 7.

and the rest, He speaks of the ratification in Heaven of the decisions and judgments and laws passed on earth. The clause, 'Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven,' shows that the decisions of the authority thus sanctioned relate to matters which have to do with spiritual things and the eternal interests of the soul. As to these the decisions of the earthly judge or ruler are to be valid even in Heaven, Heaven itself will not loose where Peter has bound, nor bind where he has loosed.

Thus the Church is secure, not only against the assaults of the gates of Hell, but against any invalidation of her decisions by God Himself. She is thus enabled to discharge to the full her great mission and charge for the good of souls, a mission which requires that her definitions should be infallible truth, and her judgments irreversible justice. For to say that Heaven will ratify her definitions and her judgments, is the same thing as to say that her definitions and her judgments shall be such that there will be nothing in them for Heaven itself to find amiss, and that the sanctions of Heaven will always be ready to follow the decisions of the earthly representative of Heaven. But this could not be, unless those decisions were to be so divinely guided as to admit of no reversal or correction. Thus these simple words convey the full promise of Infallibility. These are the prerogatives conferred in this great passage on St. Peter, personally indeed, in the sense that they belong to him individually, but in his character of the foundation and chief ruler of the Church, and therefore not in St. Peter singly, but on St. Peter reigning and ruling in his successors in his infallible chair and supreme throne.

'Then He commanded His disciples that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.' It is no new

thing to find our Lord forbidding the manifestation of His greatness and power, as in the case of so many of the miracles. But there seems to have been some special cause for this injunction now, as there was also for the injunction which followed soon after this, about not manifesting the vision of the Transfiguration until after the Resurrection. If our Lord had been publicly and generally proclaimed to be the Christ, a number of inconveniences might have followed. In the first place, the people might have been excited to insurrection. In the second place, many who were on their way to the full faith, which the Apostles had themselves attained to, not without great difficulty, might have been put back, as others had already been put back by the teaching in the synagogue of Capharnaum concerning the Blessed Sacrament, veiled and reserved as that teaching had been. In the third place, the people would have been most seriously scandalized by the Passion, to an extent which might not have been easily repaired, even by the Resurrection and all that followed on it. For it was not in the designs of God that our Lord should be made manifest to all the people after His Resurrection, but only to the chosen witnesses who were to prove it to others. And some of the holy writers tell us that when a doctrine like that has been held for a time, and then abandoned, it is most extremely difficult to revive it in the minds out of which it had gone. We see this in the case of apostates from the faith, who when they have once truly given it up, for whatever motive, are very seldom brought back, and there are some very terrible passages in the New Testament which confirm this statement. Moreover, the Apostles themselves were to be shaken, not indeed in the substance of their faith, but at least in their constancy in professing it, and for this reason also it would

be very perilous for them to preach now, what they were by-and-bye to seem to abandon.

This then is the final act of our Lord during this great period over which we have had to pass, an act, we cannot doubt, full of joy and exultation to His Sacred Heart. As the Incarnation was accomplished when Mary's trial was over, and she became the Mother of God, so the foundation of the Church was practically accomplished when Peter was chosen to be the Rock on which she was to be built. Our Lord could now look forward to all the glory to His Father of which she was to be the instrument, He could indulge the tenderness of His love for her, He could contemplate the millions of her children in whom He was to find satisfaction and consolation, He could see her in her conflict with the gates of Hell triumphing over them in the strength which she was to derive from Him through the Rock on which He rested. He could count up the blessings to mankind contained in the institution of the Holy See, He could foresee how age after age Peter and his successors would wield the power of the keys, and bind and loose on earth what has to be bound and loosed in Heaven. This was something more than a compensation for the dulness of the Jews, the bitterness of His enemies, the malignity of so many who were at that moment serving at the altar in Jerusalem. Thus this period of apparent failure and proscription closes with a glory which enlightens earth and gives endless joy to Heaven, the creation of the Catholic Church.

APPENDIX



Harmony of the Gospels

APPENDIX.

Harmony of the Gospels.

§ 68.—*Our Lord without honour in His own country.*

Matt. xiii. 54—58 ; ix. 35.

And coming into His own country, He taught them in their synagogues, so that they wondered and said, How came this Man by this wisdom and miracles? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not His Mother called Mary, and His brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Jude? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Whence therefore hath He all these things? And they were scandalized in regard of Him.

But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And He wrought not many miracles there, because of their unbelief. And Jesus went about all the cities and towns, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease, and every infirmity.

Mark vi. 1—6.

And going out from thence, He went into His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the sabbath was come, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many hearing Him were in admiration at His doctrine, saying, How came this Man by all these things? and what wisdom is this that is given to Him, and such miracles as are wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joseph, and Jude, and Simon? are not also His sisters here with us? And they were scandalized in regard of Him.

And Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house, and among his own kindred. And He could not do any miracles there, only that He cured a few that were sick, laying His hands upon them, and He wondered because of their unbelief, and He went through the villages round about teaching.

§ 69.—*The Apostles sent out to preach.*

Matt. ix. 36—38 ;
x. 1—15.

Mark vi. 7—11.

Luke ix. 1—5.

And seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them, because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd. Then He saith to His disciples, The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth labourers into His harvest.

And having called His twelve disciples together, He gave them power over . . . unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of diseases, and all manner of infirmities.

And the names of the twelve Apostles are these, the first, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, and James the son of

And He called the twelve, and began to send them two and two, and gave them power over . . . unclean spirits.

Then calling together the twelve Apostles, He gave them power and authority over all devils, and to heal diseases. And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to cure the sick.

Matt. x. 4—12.

Alphæus, and Thaddæus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. These twelve Jesus sent, commanding them, saying, Go ye not into the way of the gentiles, and into the cities of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go ye rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And going, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils, freely have you received, freely give.

Do not possess gold nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his meat.

And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. And when you come into the house, salute it, saying, Peace be to

Mark vi. 8—10.

And He commanded them that they should take nothing for the journey, but a staff only, no scrip, no bread, nor money in their purse. But to be shod with sandals, and that they should not put on two coats.

And He said to them, Wheresoever you shall enter into an house, there abide till you depart from that place.

Luke ix. 3, 4.

And He said to them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staff, nor scrip, nor bread, nor money, neither have two coats.

And whatsoever house you shall enter into, abide there, and depart not from thence.

Matt. x. 13—15.

this house. And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it; but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

Mark vi. 11.

And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, going forth from thence, shake off the dust from your feet for a testimony to them.

Luke ix. 5.

And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off even the dust of your feet, for a testimony against them.

§ 70.—*Our Lord's charge to His Apostles.*

Matt. x. 16—42.

Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of men. For they will deliver you up in councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors, and before kings for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the gentiles. But when they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what you speak, for it shall be given to you in that hour what to speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.

The brother also shall de-

Matt. x. 21—25.

liver up the brother to death, and the father the son, and the children shall rise up against their parents and shall put them to death. And you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake, but he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved. And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another. Amen I say to you, you shall not finish all the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man come. The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the good man of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?

Matt. x. 26—36.

Therefore fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, nor hid that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light, and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops. And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul, but rather fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into Hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father? But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, better are you than many sparrows.

Every one therefore that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father Who is in Heaven. But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father Who is in Heaven.

Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth. I came not to send peace, but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against

Matt. x. 36—42.

his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life, shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it.

He that receiveth you, receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet, and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.

§ 71.—*Death of St. John Baptist.*

Matt. xi. 1 ;
xiv. 1—13.

Mark vi. 12—29.

Luke ix. 6—9 ;
iii. 19, 20.

And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding His twelve disciples, He passed from thence, to

And going forth they preached that men should do penance, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were

And going out, they went about through the towns, preaching the Gospel, and healing everywhere.

Matt. xiv. 1—5.

teach and preach in their cities.

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the fame of Jesus. And he said to his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him.

[For Herod had apprehended John and bound him, and put him into prison, because of Herodias, his brother's wife. For John said to him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And having a mind to put him to death, he feared the people, because they esteemed him as a prophet.]

Mark vi. 14—20.

sick, and healed them.

And King Herod heard (for his name was made manifest), and he said, John the Baptist is risen again from the dead, and therefore mighty works show forth themselves in him. And others said, It is Elias. But others said, It is a prophet, as one of the prophets. Which Herod hearing, said, John whom I beheaded, he is risen again from the dead.

[For Herod himself had sent and apprehended John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias the wife of Philip his brother, because he had married her. For John said to Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Now Herodias laid snares for him, and was desirous to put him to death, and could not, for Herod feared John, knowing him to be a just and holy man, and kept him, and when he heard

Luke ix. 7—9; iii. 19, 20.

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all things that were done by Him, and he was in a doubt, because it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead, but by other some, that Elias hath appeared, and by others, that one of the old prophets was risen again. And Herod said, John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things? And he sought to see Him.

[But Herod the tetrarch, when he was reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, he added this also above all, and shut up John in prison.]

Matt. xiv. 6—9.

But on Herod's birth-day the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath; to give her whatsoever she would ask of him.

But she being instructed before by her mother, said, Give me here in a dish the head of John the Baptist.

And the king

Mark vi. 21—26.

him, did many things, and he heard him willingly.

And when a convenient day was come, Herod made a supper for his birth-day, for the princes, and tribunes, and chief men of Galilee. And when the daughter of the same Herodias had come in, and had danced, and pleased Herod, and them that were at table with him, the king said to the damsel, Ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he swore to her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask I will give thee, though it be the half of my kingdom.

Who when she was gone out, said to her mother, What shall I ask? But she said, The head of John the Baptist. And when she was come in immediately with haste to the king, she asked, saying, I will that forthwith thou give me in a dish the head of John the Baptist.

And the king

Matt. xiv. 10—12.

was struck sad, yet because of his oath, and for them that sat with him at table, he commanded it to be given. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a dish, and it was given to the damsel, and she brought it to her mother.

And his disciples came and took the body, and buried it, and came and told Jesus.]

Mark vi. 27—29.

was struck sad, yet because of his oath, and because of them that were with him at table, he would not displease her. But sending an executioner, he commanded that his head should be brought in a dish. And he beheaded him in the prison, and brought his head in a dish, and gave it to the damsel, and the damsel gave it to her mother.

Which His disciples hearing came, and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.]

§ 72.—*The feeding of five thousand men.*

Matt. xiv. 13—21.

Which when Jesus had heard He retired from thence by a boat, into a desert place apart, and the multitudes having heard of it, followed Him on foot out of the cities.

Mark vi. 30—44.

And the Apostles coming together unto Jesus, related to Him all things that they had done and taught. And He said to them, Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little. For there were many coming and going, and they had not so much as time to eat. And going up into a ship, they went into a desert place apart. And they saw them going away, and many knew, and they ran flocking thither on foot from all the cities, and were there before them.

And He coming forth saw a great multitude, and had compassion on them, and healed their sick.

And when it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the hour is now past, send away the multitudes, that going into the towns they may buy themselves victuals. But Jesus said to

And Jesus going out saw a great multitude, and He had compassion on them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, and He began to teach them many things.

And when the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a desert place, and the hour is now past, send them away, that going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves bread.

§ 72.—*The feeding of five thousand men.*

Luke ix. 10—17.

And the Apostles, when they were returned, told Him all they had done. And taking them, He went aside into a desert place apart, which belonged to Bethsaida. Which when the people knew they followed Him.

And He received them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and healed them who had need of healing.

Now the day began to decline. And the twelve came and said to Him, Send away the multitude, that going into the towns and villages round about, they may lodge and get meat, for we are here in a desert place.

John vi. 1—13.

After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias. And a great multitude, followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Pasch, the festival of the Jews, was near at hand.

When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little.

One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him, There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes, but what are these among so many?

Matt. xiv. 17—21.

them, They have no need to go, give you them to eat. They answered Him, We have not here, but five loaves and two fishes. He said to them, Bring them hither to Me.

And when He had commanded the multitudes to sit down upon the grass, He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to Heaven, He blessed and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitudes. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up what remained, twelve full baskets of fragments. And the number of them that did eat was five thousand men, besides women and children.

Mark vi. 37—44.

And He answering said to them, Give you them to eat. And they said to Him, Let us go and buy bread for two hundred pence, and we will give them to eat. And He saith to them, How many loaves have you? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes.

And He commanded them that they should make them all sit down by companies upon the green grass. And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds and by fifties. And when He had taken the five loaves, and the two fishes, looking up to Heaven, He blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave to His disciples to set before them, and the two fishes He divided among them all. And they all did eat, and were filled. And they took up the leavings, twelve full baskets of fragments, and of the fishes. And they that did eat, were five thousand men.

Luke ix. 13—17.

But He said to them, Give you them to eat. And they said, We have no more than five loaves and two fishes, unless perhaps we should go and buy victuals for all this multitude.

Now there were about five thousand men. And He said to His disciples, Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fishes, He looked up to Heaven, and blessed them, and He broke, and distributed to His disciples to set before the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled. And there were taken up of fragments that remained to them, twelve baskets.

John vi. 10—13.

Then Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were sat down. In like manner also of the fishes, as much as they would. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten.

§ 73.—*Our Lord walking on the waters.*

Matt. xiv. 22—36.

And forthwith Jesus obliged His disciples to go up into the boat, and to go before Him over the water, till He dismissed the people. And having dismissed the multitude, He went up into a mountain alone to pray. And when it was evening, He was there alone.

But the boat in the midst of the sea was tossed with the waves, for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking upon the sea. And they seeing Him walking upon the sea, were troubled, saying, It is an apparition. And they cried out for fear. And immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be of good heart, it is I, fear ye not.

And Peter, making answer, said,

Mark vi. 45—56.

And immediately He obliged His disciples to go up into the ship, that they might go before Him over the water to Bethsaida, whilst He dismissed the people. And when He had dismissed them, He went up into the mountain to pray. And when it was late, the ship was in the midst of the sea, and Himself alone on the land.

And seeing them labouring in rowing (for the wind was against them) and about the fourth watch of the night, He cometh to them walking upon the sea, and He would have passed by them. But they seeing Him walking upon the sea, thought it was an apparition, and they cried out. For they all saw Him, and were troubled. And immediately He spoke with them, and said to them, Have a good heart, it is I, fear ye not.

John vi. 14—24.

Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said, This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore, when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, fled again into the mountain Himself alone. And when evening was come, His disciples went down to the sea.

And when they had gone up into a ship, they went over the sea to Capharnaum, and it was now dark, and Jesus was not come unto them. And the sea arose, by reason of a great wind that blew. When they had rowed therefore about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking upon the sea and drawing nigh to the ship, and they were afraid. But He saith to them, It is I, fear ye not.

Matt. xiv. 29—34.

Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter going down out of the boat, walked upon the water to come to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid, and when he began to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretching forth His hand, took hold of him, and said to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?

And when they were come up into the boat, the wind ceased. And they that were in the boat came and adored Him, saying, Indeed Thou art the Son of God.

And when they had passed over, they came into the country of Genesar.

Mark vi. 51—53.

And He went up to them into the ship, and the wind ceased, and they were far more astonished within themselves. For they understood not concerning the loaves, for their heart was blinded.

And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Genesareth, and set to the shore.

John vi. 21, 22.

They were willing therefore to take Him into the ship, and presently the ship was at the land to which they were going.

The next day, the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea, saw that there was no other boat there but one, and that Jesus had not entered into the ship with His disciples, but that His disciples were gone away alone. But

Matt. xiv. 35, 36.

Mark vi. 54—56.

John vi. 23, 24.

And when the men of that place had knowledge of Him, they sent into all that country, and brought to all that were sick. And they besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment. And as many as touched, were made whole.

And when they were gone out of the ship, immediately they knew Him. And running through that whole country they began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into towns or into villages or cities, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch but the hem of His garment, and as many as touched Him were made whole.

other ships came in from Tiberias, nigh unto the place where they had eaten the bread, the Lord giving thanks. When therefore the multitude saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus.

§ 74.—*Our Lord's Discourse on the Bread from Heaven.*

John vi. 25—72.

And when they had found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, Rabbi, when camest Thou hither? Jesus answered them, and said, Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of Man will give you. For Him hath God, the Father, sealed.

They said therefore unto Him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered, and said to them, This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent. They said therefore to Him, What sign therefore dost Thou show that we may see, and may believe Thee? What dost Thou work? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert, as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat.⁶ Then Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life to the world.

They said therefore unto Him, Lord, give us always

John vi. 35—45.

this bread. And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life, he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. But I said unto you, that you also have seen Me, and you believe Me not. All that the Father giveth to Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me, I will not cast out. Because I came down from Heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me. Now this is the will of the Father Who sent Me, that of all that He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again in the last day. And this is the will of My Father that sent Me, that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in Him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day.

The Jews therefore murmured at Him, because He had said, I am the living bread, which came down from Heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, I came down from Heaven?

Jesus therefore answered, and said to them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to Me, except the Father, Who hath sent Me, draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath

¹ Psalm lxxvii. 24.

John vi. 46—59.

heard of the Father, and hath learned, cometh to Me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, but He Who is of God, He hath seen the Father. Amen, amen, I say unto you, He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die. I am the living bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give, is My flesh, for the life of the world.

The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?

Then Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say unto you, Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth

John vi. 60—72.

this bread, shall live for ever.

These things He said, teaching in the synagogue in Capharnaum. Many therefore of His disciples, hearing it, said, This saying is hard, and who can hear it?

But Jesus, knowing in Himself, that His disciples murmured at this, said to them, Doth this scandalize you? If then you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I have spoken to you, are spirit and life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning, who they were that did not believe, and who he was that would betray Him. And He said, Therefore did I say to you, that no man can come to Me, unless it be given him by My Father.

After this many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him. Then Jesus said to the twelve, Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known, that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? Now He meant Judas Iscariot the son of Simon, for this same was about to betray Him, whereas He was one of the twelve.

§ 75.—*Dispute with the Pharisees about Traditions.*

Matt. xv. 1—20.

Then came to Him from Jerusalem Scribes and Pharisees, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the ancients? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

But He answering, said to them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God for your tradition? For God said, Honour thy father and mother, and, He that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death.¹ But you say, Whoever shall say to father or mother, The gift whatsoever proceedeth from me shall profit thee, and he shall not honour his father or his mother, and you have made void the commandment of God for your tradition. Hypocrites, well hath Isaias

Mark vii. 1—23.

And there assembled together unto Him the Pharisees and some of the Scribes, coming from Jerusalem. And when they had seen some of His disciples eat bread with common, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, eat not without often washing their hands, holding the tradition of the ancients, and when they come from the market, unless they be washed, they eat not, and many other things there are that have been delivered to them to observe, the washing of cups and of pots, and of brazen vessels, and of beds. And the Pharisees and Scribes asked Him, Why do not Thy disciples walk according to the tradition of the ancients, but they eat bread with common hands?

But He answering, said to them, Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honour-eth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and precepts of men, For leaving the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the washing of pots and of cups, and many other things you do like to these. And He said to them, Well do you make void the commandment of God, that you may

¹ Exod. xx. 12 ; xxi. 17.

Matt. xv. 8—17.

prophesied of you, saying, This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain do they worship Me, teaching doctrines and commandments of men.¹

And having called together the multitudes unto Him, He said to them, Hear ye and understand. Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but what cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.

Then came His disciples, and said to Him, Dost Thou know that the Pharisees, when they heard this word, were scandalized? But He answering, said, Every plant which My Heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone, they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit. And Peter answering, said to Him, Expound to us this parable. But He said, Are you also yet without understanding? Do you not understand, that whatso-

Mark vii. 10—19.

keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother, and, He that shall curse his father or mother, dying let him die. But you say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban (which is a gift), whatsoever is from me shall profit thee. And further you suffer him not to do anything for his father or mother, making void the word of God by your own tradition, which you have given forth. And many other such like things you do.

And calling again the multitude unto Him, He said to them, Hear ye Me all and understand. There is nothing from without a man that entering into him, can defile him. But the things which come from a man, those are they that defile a man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear.

And when He was come into the house from the multitude, His disciples asked Him the parable. And He saith to them, So are you also without knowledge? understand you not that everything from without, entering into a man cannot defile him. Because it entereth not into his heart, but goeth into the

¹ Isaias xxix. 13.

Matt. xv. 18—20.

ever entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the privy? But the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man. For from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man. But to eat with unwashed hands doth not defile a man.

Mark vii. 20—23.

belly, and goeth out into the privy, purging all meats? But, He said, that the things which proceed out of a man, they defile a man. For from within out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within, and defile a man.

§ 76.—*The Syrophœnician Woman.*

Matt. xv. 21—28.

And Jesus went from thence, and retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

And behold a woman of Canaan who came out of those coasts, crying out, said to Him, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.

And He answering, said, I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel. But she came and adored Him, saying, Lord, help me. Who answering, said, It is not good to take the bread of the children, and to cast it to the dogs.

Mark vii. 24—30.

And rising from thence, He went into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And entering into a house, He would that no man should know it, and He could not be hid.

For a woman as soon as she heard of Him, whose daughter had an unclean spirit, came in, and fell down at His feet. For the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophœnician born. And she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.

Who said to her, Suffer first the children to be filled, for it is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs.

Matt. xv. 27, 28.

But she said, Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering, said to her, O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was cured from that hour.

Mark vii. 28—30.

But she answered, and said to Him, Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat under the table of the crumbs of the children. And He said to her, For this saying go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come into her house, she found the girl lying upon the bed, and that the devil was gone out.

§ 77.—*The deaf and dumb healed.*

Mark vii. 31—37.

And again going out of the coasts of Tyre, He came by Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coast of Decapolis. And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb, and they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue, and looking up to Heaven, He groaned, and

Mark vii. 35—37.

said to him, Ephpheta, which is, Be thou opened. And immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And He charged them that they should tell no man. But the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it. And so much the more did they wonder, saying, He hath done all things well, He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak.

· § 78.—*The feeding of four thousand men.*

Matt. xv. 29—39.

And when Jesus had passed away from thence, He came nigh the sea of Galilee, and going up into a mountain, He sat there. And there came to Him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the blind, the lame, the maimed, and many others,

Mark viii. 1—10.

Matt. xv. 31—39.

and they cast them down at His feet, and He healed them. So that the multitudes marvelled, seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

And Jesus called together His disciples, and said, I have compassion on the multitudes, because they have been with Me now three days, and have not what to eat, and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.

And the disciples say unto Him, Whence, then, should we have so many loaves in the desert as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus said to them, How many loaves have you? But they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.

And He commanded the multitude to sit down upon the ground. And taking the seven loaves and the fishes, and giving thanks, He brake, and gave to His disciples, and the disciples gave to the people. And they did all eat, and were filled. And they took up seven baskets full, of what remained of the fragments. And they that did eat were four thousand men, besides children and women. And having dismissed the multitude, He went up into a boat and came into the coasts of Magedan.

Mark viii. 1—10

In those days again, when there was a great multitude, and had nothing to eat, calling His disciples together, He saith to them, I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have not what to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off.

And His disciples answered Him, Whence can any one fill them here with bread in the desert? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? But they said, Seven.

And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks, He brake, and gave to His disciples for to set before them, and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat, and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand, and He sent them away. And immediately going up into a ship with His disciples, He came into the parts of Dalmanutha.

§ 79.—*The leaven of the Pharisees.*

Matt. xvi. 1—12.

And there came to Him the Pharisees and Sadducees tempting, and they asked Him to show them a sign from Heaven.

But He answered and said to them, When it is evening, you say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, To-day there will be a storm, for the sky is red and lowering. You know then how to discern the face of the sky, and can you not know the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. And He left them and went away.

And when His disciples were come over the water, they had forgotten to take bread. Who said to them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. But they thought within themselves, saying, Because we have taken no bread.

And Jesus knowing it, said, Why do you think within yourselves, O ye of little faith, for that you have no bread? Do you not yet understand, neither do you remember the five loaves among five thousand men, and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves among four thousand men, and how many baskets you took up? Why do you not understand that it was

Mark viii. 11—20.

And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with Him, asking Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him.

And sighing deeply in spirit, He saith, Why doth this generation ask a sign? Amen I say to you, If a sign shall be given to this generation. And leaving them, He went up again into the ship, and passed to the other side of the water.

And they forgot to take bread, and they had but one loaf with them in the ship. And He charged them, saying, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, Because we have no bread.

Which Jesus knowing, saith to them, Why do you reason, because you have no bread? do you not yet know nor understand? have you still your heart blinded? Having eyes, see you not? and having ears, hear you not? neither do you remember? When I broke the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took you up? They say to Him, Twelve. When

Matt. xvi. 12.

not concerning bread I said to you, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Then they understood that He said not that they should beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Mark viii. 21.

also the seven loaves among four thousand, how many baskets of fragments took you up? And they say to Him, Seven. And He said to them, How do you yet not understand?

§ 80.—*The Blind man at Bethsaida.*

Mark viii. 22—26.

And they came to Bethsaida, and they brought to Him a blind man, and they besought Him that He would touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, He led him out of the town, and spitting upon his eyes, laying His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything.

Mark viii. 24—26.

And looking up, he said, I see men as it were trees, walking. After that again, He laid His hands upon his eyes, and he began to see, and was restored, so that he saw all things clearly. And He sent him into his house, saying, Go into thy house, and if thou enter into the town, tell nobody.

§ 81.—*The Confession of St. Peter.*

Matt. xvi. 13—20.

And Jesus came into the quarters of Cæsarea Philippi, and He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that the Son of Man is? But they said, Some John the Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jere-

Mark viii. 27—30.

And Jesus went out, and His disciples, into the towns of Cæsarea Philippi. And in the way, He asked His disciples, saying to them, Whom do men say that I am? Who answered Him, saying, John the Baptist,

Luke ix. 18—21.

And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples also were with Him, and He asked them, saying, Whom do the people say that I am? But they answered, and said, John the Baptist, but some say

Matt. xvi. 15—20.

mias, or one of the prophets.

Jesus saith to them, But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answering, said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I say to thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven.

Then He commanded His disciples, that they should tell no one that He was Jesus the Christ.

Mark viii. 29, 30.

but some Elias, and others as one of the prophets.

Then He saith to them, But whom do you say that I am? Peter answering, said to Him, Thou art the Christ.

And He strictly charged them that they should not tell any man of Him.

Luke ix. 20, 21.

Elias, and others say, that one of the former prophets is risen again.

And He said to them, But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answering, said, The Christ of God.

But He strictly charging them, commanded they should tell this to no man.

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